Social Media as a News Source: How *The Guardian* Uses Social Media Texts to Report on Crisis Events

By Johanna Baker-Dowdell
BA (Communication Studies), University of Newcastle
BA (Honours), University of Tasmania

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy, Arts

School of Creative Arts and Media,
University of Tasmania

December 2020

Abstract

This thesis investigates the significance of social media texts as news sources in traditional journalistic crisis reporting and how the practice of using such texts has evolved. It studies verification techniques and tools used by professional reporters and the impact newspaper journalists' usage of social media texts has on the quality of resulting media coverage. During crisis events, journalists and media outlets frequently turn to social media in order to understand how and where the event is unfolding, who the main players are and who can help them tell the story. This thesis follows how crisis reporting produced by one print outlet – *The Guardian* – evolved through incorporating social media into that journalistic product.

This thesis advances the understanding of how user-generated content is sourced via social media, verification methods used and the ways journalists incorporate the texts into crisis reporting. Media coverage of three crisis events over an eight-year period from the print edition of *The Guardian* was analysed, with data examined during research interviews with media professionals from that publication and social media users. It found crisis reporting has become a more transparent and iterative process through audience participation and collaboration. As such, this thesis contributes to scholarship around the changing nature of crisis reporting and the evolution of journalistic practice, building practical knowledge around how journalists can source, verify and use social media texts created during future crises as this collaborative journalistic practice continues to evolve.

Declaration of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

Authority of Access

This thesis may be made available for loan and limited copying and communication in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968

Statement of Ethical Conduct

The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes on human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian Government's Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committees of the University. Ethics Approval No: H0014138.

Johanna Baker-Dowdell

December 2020

Acknowledgements

Immense gratitude goes to my supervisory team, which has been expansive during the course of this project. My two primary supervisors, Dr Katrina Clifford and Dr Kathleen Williams, helped me develop the confidence to study the intricacies of the industry I love and the ability to ask the deeper questions needed for academic study. Also, to Dr Craig Norris, who saw potential in my initial research ideas and encouraged me to think bigger as well as being a supervisor; Dr Nick Hookway, who gave me an alternative viewpoint; and Professor Libby Lester, who stepped in during the final stages, but has been present throughout this entire course of study.

My appreciation also goes to *The Guardian*'s journalists and editors, past and present, who allowed me to delve into their practice around social media texts and ask why and how repeatedly; also to the social media users who gave me the insight needed from the other side of this storytelling coin to show journalism's evolution.

Thanks also to my friends who checked in on me and stayed interested in this project over the course of many years, particularly Suse Henshaw, who talked through project trials and triumphs with me as we walked each morning, And, finally, to my family – Harvey, Noah and Ethan – you always believed in me and encouraged me all the way along. Thank you.

Contents

List of Tables and Graphs

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In just 26 seconds of silent grainy film, shot on November 22, 1963, Abraham Zapruder captured the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas. The dressmaker started filming the presidential motorcade thinking he was capturing a historic moment, but did not realise just how important his film would become. Now available on YouTube in various formats, viewers can see the full, undamaged copy Robert Harris uploaded (Zapruder 2008). Zapruder made three copies for government investigators and sold the original film to *Life* magazine for $150,000 (Rosenbaum 2013). The original film was damaged while at *Life*, resulting in some missing frames (Anonymous 2019), however Zapruder himself considered frame 313 which depicts the impact – something Rosenbaum describes as "like a lightning bolt" striking John F Kennedy's head – should not be shown as it "gave him nightmares" (2013). *Life* withheld frame 313 when publishing the film, but the full film has since been made available.

This recording is considered one of the first, and most recognisable, examples of amateur news reporting (Allan 2013) because, although Zapruder's capture of Kennedy's assassination was accidental, it shows the event more fully than other photographic and film depictions. More than 40 years later amateurs again told the story when home-made bombs ripped through London's transport system in July 2005. However, there was not only a single storyteller during the 2005 event, but hundreds of passengers and onlookers who shared their own impressions of what happened from inside the crisis. By the time

legacy media had responded to the London terrorist attack it was over, making the amateur reportage a vital tool in visually telling the story. The way user-generated content was used by traditional media to report on the London Bombings redefined crisis reporting – and that evolution has continued since.

This thesis contributes to the understanding of how professional journalists use social media texts when they are reporting on crisis events. By analysing three crisis events over an eight-year time period, and by interviewing professional journalists and editors and social media users, this thesis looks deeper into the ways the practice of crisis reporting has evolved into a more transparent and iterative process through audience participation. An understanding of this practice is important when considering how social media texts created during future crisis events will be incorporated into news reporting, and how this collaborative reporting method will continue to evolve. Critically, this thesis contributes to this conversation by looking at how one outlet – *The Guardian* – changed its approach to user-generated content over time. This provides an opportunity to become immersed in the way journalistic practice has evolved in one newsroom, thus providing an exemplar for other media outlets to model.

This longitudinal study of *The Guardian* begins with the media coverage of the London Bombings in 2005, moves on the England Riots of 2011 and ends with the coverage of the murder of British solider Lee Rigby in 2013. This eight-year time period provides a small snapshot when looking at the study of media, but eight years is a long time in the development of social media, the tool being investigated as a significant news source.

Digital social media platforms were in their infancy in 2005, at the beginning of this thesis, so this time frame provides a basis from which to follow its development through the lens of crisis reporting. *The Guardian* was selected for this thesis because, as a newspaper, it was an early adopter in incorporating social media texts in reporting (GNM Archive 2002). Following three key events enables the differences in the social media platforms and the way they are used by professional journalists to be highlighted – and also gives a foundation for a study of the way that practice has changed over the prescribed time period.

In the 55 years since Kennedy's assassination, citizen witnessing has developed to become a widespread practice through the availability of technology in both production and consumption (Allan 2013; Anden-Papadopoulos 2013; Pantti 2013; Anden-Papdopoulos and Pantti 2013; Cottle 2014). Consider, for example, news of the plane crashing into the Hudson River, which broke on Twitter (Krums 2009), or when Osama Bin Laden's capture was live-tweeted by an Islamabad café owner (Athar 2011). Both men broke international news stories on social media and became sources for coverage of the events in the ensuing days, and these events have become touchstones in the academic discussion of the changing media landscape (Bainbridge, Carolyn and Tynan 2011; Allan 2013). Indeed Alan Rusbridger, who edited *The Guardian* during the crisis events studied in this thesis, said Twitter was "where things happen first" (2010). Our use of media technologies has evolved to the point where almost everyone owns or has access to a smartphone, or similar device, that allows them to capture, produce and share content about such events with others on a multitude of publishing platforms.

When a crisis hits, journalists and the public alike now turn to social media to find out more. A topic or hashtag trending on social media is a sign there is something big happening and should be investigated further. For a journalist investigating a potential news story, social media can be a mine of information about what has happened, where to start searching and the relevant sources online at that time (Lewis 2012; Knight 2012; Knight and Cook 2013; Djerf-Pierre, Ghersetti and Hedman 2016). When every second counts in the race to publish the story first, a ready eyewitness source who can tell a journalist what happened, or a participatory journalist who has documented the event via social media, is invaluable. It means a head start on the research and fact-checking front, but also sets up a foundation for the beginnings of a story that can be built and published iteratively as more facts come to light.

This thesis draws on six years of academic investigation of journalistic practice, informed by my professional work as a newspaper journalist for more than 20 years. It focuses on the way social media is credited with redefining journalistic practice in crisis reporting, encompassing traditional reporting techniques and modern journalistic tools. While social media has definitely impacted modern journalistic practice by contributing to the speed of the reporting process, there are many aspects about the profession that remain as they have always been, namely journalists' objectivity, ethical values and verification techniques. I came to academia with direct experience of working as a news journalist, coupled with an interest in social media as a user in both a personal and professional capacity. Using my own understanding of reporting practice during crises and

professional insights into such reporting of three cases in the United Kingdom, I researched how social media texts became an element within modern crisis reporting to inform the practice of journalists covering future crises and to understand how the practice has evolved.

The Guardian's reporting on the three crisis events studied – London Bombings, England Riots and the murder of British solider Lee Rigby – all included elements of participatory journalism. These events illustrate how traditional journalists used social media texts over an eight-year time period, allowing the changes in practice to be tracked. *The Guardian* was chosen as the prime source for analysis because, from its very beginnings, this publication publicly and enthusiastically embraced participatory journalism. Indeed its founder, Manchester businessman John Edward Taylor, seized an opportunity to report on the Peterloo Massacre in 1819 when *Times* reporter John Tyas was unable to file his report (Rusbridger 2018). As Rusbridger tells the story, "Taylor wrote his own report and got it swiftly to London. It was printed in the *Times* on the morning of 18 August, two days later" (2018: 17). This incident proved worthy impetus for Taylor to start the *Manchester Guardian* in 1821. Initially published weekly, the *Guardian* reported the "House of Commons debate on the Peterloo massacre, over nine-and-a-half columns" in its third edition (2018: 18). Taylor's nephew C.P. Scott became the *Guardian*'s editor in 1872, becoming the newspaper's owner in 1907. After the deaths of his father and brother, CP Scott's son John Russell Scott established the Scott Trust in 1936 to "preserve and protect the *Guardian* in perpetuity" (Rusbridger 2018: 19). The Scott Trust became a limited company in 2008 "in order to strengthen the protection" for the

publication (The Guardian 2015).

This thesis covers a period when newspaper circulation continues to fall around the world, while digital readership thrives. Print circulation for the *Guardian* dropped by 40 per cent in the eight years covered in this study: Audit Bureau of Circulations figures reported in the publication's Media section show 340,499 copies in February 2005, falling to 203,069 in December 2013 (The Guardian 2005, 2014). Reflecting changes in the industry and reader appetite, the *Guardian* moved from a broadsheet newspaper to Berliner, a size between broadsheet and tabloid formats, in 2005. A new typeface – Guardian Egyptian – and full-colour printing to allow for "beautiful image reproduction" accompanied the 2005 format change, with the typeface adopted across all print and online brands in 2015 (Williams 2015). The publication's "Comment is Free" opinion site launched in 2006 as an open space for debate and discussion, with existing *Guardian* columnists and others who wanted to contribute their voice on any manner of topics. It was launched on propriety word-processing platform Movable Type and "…within a year, there had been a few thousand voices on the *Guardian* site who would never have been heard before. It was a lively, buzzing, disputatious, sometimes anarchic, sometimes worrying, often uplifting space" (Rusbridger 2018: 116). *Guardian* creative director Alex Breuer acknowledged the print format change was significant in 2005, but conceded the industry and its audience had moved on by 2015 when he reflected on the newspaper's evolving digital brand and readership. He says: "…print is a fraction of our readership. We have 130 million unique readers a month, and most of those I pretty much guarantee

have never seen a copy of the newspaper… because most of them aren't in the UK" (Williams 2015: 85). The publication size dropped again – to tabloid – in 2017.

The *Guardian* started developing its online publication in 1994, began experimenting with live-blogs in 1997 (Rusbridger 2018: 107) and launched the *Guardian Unlimited* network of niche websites called talkboards in 1999 (GNM Archive 2002; Rusbridger 2018). The then editor, Alan Rusbridger, later wrote that talkboards were "ahead of their time" (2018: 69) in that "…readers started their own threads on multiple issues a day – including media, film, books, international news" (2018: 66). Talkboards were not only an online space where readers could discuss a favourite topic, but these boards became communities: people met friends and partners there, one couple live-posted their home birth and another reader was supported during cancer treatment. By 2001 the newspaper's online presence had more than 2.4 million users and was the most popular newspaper website in the United Kingdom. In 2008 the *Guardian* became the first UK newspaper website to reach 20 million unique users a month (GNM Archive). The following year the *Guardian* launched apps for the iPhone and iPod Touch. Apps for iPads, Android and Blackberry smartphones and Facebook followed in 2011, along with the launch of the GuardianWitness website[1] in 2013, which encouraged readers to consume news digitally, but also contribute user-generated content. *The Guardian*'s decision to publish "web-first" in 2006 (GNM Archive) and then become a "digital-first organisation" in 2011 (GNM press office 2011; Rusbridger 2018), where open journalism was embraced rather than resisted, made this publication a suitable choice for this thesis. This newspaper has

[1] witness.theguardian.com

continued to expand into the online space, overtaking the *New York Times* as the leading serious English-language newspaper website in the world in 2014 (Rusbridger 2018: 336), with digital revenue surpassing print in 2018 (Waterson 2018).

An early leader in the digital space, *The Guardian* embraced the inclusion of internet technology, including social media, in reporting and publishing news articles. Social media was in its early stages when the London Bombings occurred in 2005, the same year Guardian Unlimited won best newspaper at the ninth Webby Awards (GNM Archive). In July 2011, the month before the England Riots broke out, *Guardian* reporter Nick Davies covered the phone-hacking scandal at *News of the World*, which led to the Leveson Inquiry in November that same year. This inquiry was established to investigate the "culture, practice and ethics of the British press" after it became evident the industry's self-regulation practices needed to be overhauled (Rusbridger 2018: 257). While the investigation of the British media industry was playing out in public (and later in court), social media was taking on a far more important role in people's daily lives, and as a reporting tool. This period also covered the time the *Guardian* started publishing digitally first. By 2013, when Lee Rigby was murdered in North London, public and professional attitudes towards social media had matured, with public use of these recording tools becoming embedded in crisis reporting. GuardianWitness, a tool for readers to share stories and contribute content with journalists, was launched at the same time. Studying *The Guardian*'s response to social media texts over a fixed period allows for a deeper insight of the governance and culture of how editorial decision making at this publication influenced journalistic response to the growth of social media.

Theoretical framework

While journalism as a profession is hundreds of years old, the academic study of the practice offers differing views around relevant theory. There is much debate about which academic discipline journalism belongs to, from social sciences (McNair 2003), to cultural studies (Zelizer 2004), arts and humanities (Nash 2013) or its own discipline – journalism studies (Carlson, Robinson, Lewis and Berkowitz 2018; Hermida 2019). This debate also includes the role of journalism's audience (McQuail 2013), the academic versus vocation debate (Fedler et al 1998; Harcup 2011) and whether it fits into academic study at all. Myles Breen observes "…there are still some within the journalistic culture who decry any notion that there is a 'theory of journalism' even though they might theorise interminably over the bar about the vagaries of their profession" (1998: 3).

The most relevant studies for this research are those dealing with crisis reporting and participatory journalism. To this end, McNair's statement explaining what journalism aspires to be is the best starting point. He argues that journalism is:

> …revealed truth, mediated reality, an account of the existing real world as appropriated by the journalist and processed in accordance with the particular requirements of the journalistic medium through which it will be disseminated to some section of the public. (1998: 9)

McNair's description of journalism explains both the act of a professional journalist (in offering an "account of the existing world") in the practice of journalism (through information being "disseminated to some section of the public"). However, McNair also touches on the bounds within which this process is carried out in this explanation. The

concepts of "revealed truth", "mediated reality" and the way journalists present their story (through a subjective lens) are all factors relevant to the discussion around crisis reporting. Questions around which parts of a crisis to show via reporting, who to interview and what to leave out are also part of the crisis reporting decision-making process. Crisis reporting, and the parameters set around such reporting, form the basis for this study into professional journalistic practice.

Crises were chosen as case studies because they "…occur when core values or life-sustaining systems of a community come under threat" (Boin and 'T Hart 2007: 43); times when people turn to the media to find out what has happened when they want information quickly (Veglis and Panagiotou 2018). Delving further into the relationship between crises and journalistic reporting of those events, Robert Heath and Michael Palenchar's crisis definition provides some insight into how the media becomes involved. The authors consider a crisis to be an event that "creates an issue, keeps it alive, or gives it strength" (2009: 278), which speaks to both the event itself and how media reporting on it can build over time. News of a crisis spreads quickly, but social media has contracted this timeline even more. Instead of waiting for a witness to tell someone about the crisis over the phone or in person, now the event is more likely to be captured by multiple eyewitnesses via photo, video or audio texts (or a combination of all three) and then tweeted or posted to Facebook or YouTube with a short explanation of what is happening (Pantti 2019: 126). Multiply this factor of speed by the number of eyewitnesses and the times their networks share the text exponentially and the information floodgates have opened. Crises are extraordinary and disruptive events that demand immediate attention

but also, in this highly connected society, action, usually in the form of sharing a personal account of the event. In Hermida's words: "When a crisis shakes the world, there is an instant flare-up of activity... Social media swings into action as a nervous system for the planet" (2014: 134). Further to this, and explaining one of the reasons journalists use social media when reporting on crises, Mervi Pantti explains that, "Twitter allows journalists to personalise their visual narratives in their own ways" (2019: 141). The way these crisis-initiated social media texts are used as news sources by newspaper journalists is an element of journalistic study that has not been extensively researched. This thesis investigates the speed at which such social media texts are incorporated into reporting, how those texts are verified by traditional journalists and how this practice fits into the evolution of crisis reporting to give insight into changing journalistic practice.

It is important to note here that there are many definitions of social media, spanning a wide scope, from how the technology developed through to the types of platforms the term encompasses. Starting with a one of the seminal studies of social networking as a whole, danah boyd and Nicole Ellison, at the time, used the term "social network sites" to describe what is now more broadly understood as social media, saying they are:

> …web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (2007: 211)

In this same vein, Kietzmann et al consider that social media uses "mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, cocreate, discuss, and modify user-generated content" (2011: 241),

but this definition is still too general because it does not fully explore the publishing dynamic that is integral to the texts under analysis within this thesis. Looking at social media on a micro level, Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein see it as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (2010: 61), where Web 2.0 is a constantly modified collaborative platform, and user-generated content texts are created by users of those internet applications. While Web 2.0 has since become an outdated term, this latter definition of social media aligns more closely with the idea that users are publishing their own texts. Delving even further into a definition that touches on journalistic production and publishing values, Valerie Belair-Gagnon explains that social media includes:

> …audience material and user-generated content (UGC), and is associated with content production such as the activity of blogging, a platform such as microblogging on Twitter or messaging a friend on Facebook… (2013: 235)

Belair-Gagnon's analysis of how social media was used in the BBC newsroom after the London Bombings gives the most relevant definition for the purposes of this thesis, as it encapsulates the broader academic understanding of social media within the immediate shadow of the events studied here. The Belair-Gagnon study also investigates participatory journalism outputs such as "audience material" and "user-generated content", which are the texts used within traditional news reporting of crises like the bombings, and that form the basis for this thesis.

The impact of amateur social media texts can be explained through the advent of the

internet and the changes this worldwide construct of information networks has brought about for audience participation in journalism (Waldman 2005) and the role of journalists (Deuze 1999) working in technology-focused workplaces. The practice of crisis reporting during the London Bombings (Allan 2007), and during critical events generally (Cottle 2013), as well as the factors at play during such reporting is also investigated within this thesis. Rusbridger considers that at its very core, journalism aspires to speed and accuracy (2018: 105), which are factors relevant in reporting generally, but come to the fore when time is of the essence, such as during a crisis. Drilling further down into crisis reporting, this thesis predominantly focuses on how the factors of speed, verification and ethics play out in traditional newspaper reporting of crisis events where social media texts are used as news sources (Bruno 2011; Karlsson 2011; Hermida 2012; Herrman 2012; Lewis 2012; Buttry 2013; Wardle 2013). It is within the practice of traditional journalism that social media texts are used as one of many tools to report on crises. This thesis provides a deeper understanding of the methods journalists use in sourcing and verifying those texts and then how the texts are incorporated into news reports of three crises events. Such knowledge leads to more informed decisions for media professionals looking to follow the same practice, with the understanding these methods have been tried and tested during past crisis reporting cases.

Current state of journalism

The initial thoughts for this thesis were formed at a time when academics, media professionals and media consumers were debating whether social media was going to

change journalism, or eliminate the need for professional journalists altogether. Smartphones can be used as mobile publishing devices, allowing anyone to tell the story of events they have witnessed (Niles et al 2019). However, the texts amateur journalists created while they witnessed a crisis have actually become part of the wider news coverage of the event, rather than superseding it (Waldman 2005). Instead of overtaking or replacing the need for traditional reporting, social media texts are helping tell the story (Allan 2007; Hermida 2012; Herrman 2012; Cottle 2013). Journalists have definitely not become lesser since amateurs became involved in news coverage but digital technologies, like social media, have enabled the professionals to use more tools and cover the story from a wider perspective as a result (Deuze 1999; Bruno 2011; Karlsson 2011; Lewis 2012; Buttry 2013; Wardle 2013). Incorporating social media texts into news storytelling takes in different people's viewpoints from experts to the eyewitness 'man on the street', but it also gives readers different sources and voices from which to hear accounts of the event.

The evolution in journalistic practice driven by social media technologies has led to a flattening in the media hierarchy, but it has also given way to a phenomenon that while not new, has far-reaching consequences for the future of media. The now ubiquitous, 'fake news', is a by-product of the vast swathe of information available online. In light of the falsified elements associated with fake updates, McNair points out that, "Questions around the veracity and authenticity of journalism have become central to concerns about the health of journalism and the Fourth Estate more broadly" (2017: 4). Fake news – or the intentional spread of false facts via news articles (McNair 2017: 5; Allcott and

Gentzkow 2017: 213) – came to the fore during the 2016 US election due to the term's use by the then presidential candidate Donald Trump. This term has since been adopted widely around the world by those wishing to discredit information in the public domain. Although President Trump's usage was typically aimed at the press, the term has also gained traction in social media usage as commentary on the sharing of articles (Clayton at al 2019). Allcott and Gentzkow claim: "…social media are well-suited for fake news dissemination, and social media use has risen sharply: in 2016, active Facebook users per month reached 1.8 billion and Twitter's approached 400 million…" (2017: 214-215). While social media might be one tool on which to disseminate fake news, it can also be used to share eyewitness reports from participatory journalists. The eyewitnessing amateur has the means and the platforms from which to share their version of a crisis publicly, and this information can then be co-opted by media outlets to give wider news coverage of the event. This thesis does not wade into the murky waters of fake news, where journalistic fact-checking and editorial judgement are debated in relation to political agenda, but rather looks at how professional journalists take the information sourced on crises from social media, verify and then use those texts.

The cases outlined in this research project illustrate an industry in a state of restructure and consolidation, rather than one under threat. This thesis investigates the work of professional journalists in the act of producing content that informs readers and explains the crisis in a truthful way (McNair 1998: 4). The professional journalists and editors interviewed for this thesis incorporated new tools and techniques into their professional practice, while still drawing on the existing journalistic standards of accuracy, objectivity

and ethical practice when reporting. Focusing on practice, social media and news source verification, this thesis draws inspiration from the work of Stuart Allan (2007; 2013; 2014; 2015) and Simon Cottle (2009; 2011; 2013; 2014), both of whom have studied the way crisis reporting has evolved through the development of participatory journalism. However, this project reorients focus to how social media has become a tool used by both professional and amateur journalists to report on crisis events to gain an understanding of how crisis reporting has changed.

Journalism fulfils many roles beyond the topic of crisis reporting investigated in this thesis. These roles include entertainment, education, activism, scrutiny and social conscience. The ability of a professional journalist to interpret what is happening in the world for an audience ensures there is still a place for this practice, despite commentary claiming technology spells the death of journalism (Deuze 2008). In explaining the guidelines traditional journalists follow in performing their job, Mark Deuze writes "[t]he concepts, values and elements said to be part of journalisms' ideology in the available literature can be categorised into five ideal-typical traits or values" (2005: 446). These elements are public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics. Both Deuze (2008) and McNair (2009) argue that while the impact of technology on journalism has forced the media industry to reimagine and expand its offering for a younger, more digital savvy audience, it still has a future. As McNair says, "Journalism is not a luxury item dreamed up by media barons in the 19th century, but a key ingredient in the social cement of liberal, democratic capitalism ever since the bourgeois revolutions" (2009: 348). Professional journalists still use each pillar of journalistic practice, as outlined

above by Deuze (2005), when reporting and interpreting information for their audience. This research study shows that of those pillars, objectivity, immediacy and ethics remain driving factors for professional journalists reporting during crises. To this end, social media texts created by amateurs are predominantly used as a tool within the professional crisis reporting process, rather than as a replacement to traditional journalism.

The significance of this thesis

An employed journalist cannot be everywhere at all times, but a crisis will always have witnesses, most of whom now have the technological means and knowledge to be a participatory journalist. With these devices, witnesses can record video, photos or audio, package their texts and publish them via social media almost instantaneously. Instead of just telling one person what has happened, the witness might be telling thousands or millions of people. They might even be breaking the news of an international crisis event, as seen with the 2009 Hudson River plane crash and Osama bin Laden's 2011 capture. This research study is significant because it investigates the implications around the way information is published and disseminated via social media during three UK crisis events and how those texts are used by *Guardian* journalists reporting on the events, with a focus on speed, veracity and ethics.

This thesis significantly contributes to the literature covering social media as a news source, specifically in the context of using such information sources in the reporting of crisis events around the world. It also contributes to the knowledge of the way crisis

events are reported by traditional news media and eyewitnesses who act as participatory journalists, including the role each actor plays in the reporting process. Although many existing studies foster greater understanding of the impact of participatory journalism and the involvement of amateurs in news production, there remains questions as to the collaborative relationships that exist when amateurs work with traditional news media during a crisis. In particular, more understanding should be developed around how social media texts published by users are verified by traditional journalists and how such texts are presented to newspaper readers (if at all) when they cannot be verified. This area of research leads to questions about the impact of technology on the traditional journalistic verification process, which feeds into the debate about what quality journalism actually is, versus a newsworthy social media update posted by an eyewitness.

The speed at which information is shared by participatory journalists about a crisis event, and the ability to verify such information, gives rise to further queries around the accuracy of amateur source material. An examination of the implications when traditional journalistic checks and balances are not applied underlines the significance of this project in the area of crisis reporting. Consider, for example, how a Reddit thread published in the wake of the Boston Bombings got out of hand when subreddit members tried to identify the bomber suspects themselves (Levenson 2015). The frenzy of online activity on Reddit and Twitter in the days following the bombings led to a number of innocent people being targeted as the bombers (Gayomali 2013; Levenson 2015). Social media adds to the number of sources available during a crisis. It also allows news to be disseminated quicker, to more people, in a speedier fashion. However, that same speed

opens up opportunities to get the facts wrong, as illustrated with the Boston Bombings Reddit example, when people are posting or sharing information they not sure about, particularly when doing this at speed and on public platforms. The study of how one media outlet approached the fast pace of crisis reporting and the methods its journalists used to verify contributed texts is a significant new introduction within the field of journalism research because it traces the evolution of *The Guardian*'s approach to social media as a reporting tool, making this historical analysis a guide to help design future investigation within this area.

Project aims

The following chapters assess how social media has impacted traditional journalistic practice and the quality of journalistic outputs in *The Guardian*'s reporting on crisis events. To achieve this aim, an analysis of how social media texts have been used in the publication's crisis reporting during three crises in the United Kingdom over an eight-year time frame was conducted. The way the pace of crisis events has affected the practice of newsgathering is of particular importance in this thesis because such fast-moving stories present issues around the accuracy of source material and verification of that material. As Belair-Gagnon explains: "In crises people's ordinary lives are interrupted, which prompts them to contribute user-generated content material to news organisations" (2015: 4). During crises social media platforms are not only used as a way of disseminating information on a mass scale and, sometimes, even as reporting tools – as evidenced during the England Riots (Lewis 2011) and Boston Bombings manhunt (Mnookin and Hong 2013) – but the texts themselves are also used as news sources

because they depict on-the-ground eyewitness activity from the scene of the crisis. These texts may be the result of disruption for an amateur journalist who is simply sharing something stunning, but for a professional journalist the amateur texts fulfil the witness component needed when reporting on a crisis.

This thesis does not investigate how participatory journalism has developed, and whether this practice contributes positively or negatively to the practice of traditional journalism. Instead, this thesis shows how the social media texts created by amateur and professional journalists have shaped crisis reporting and what changes – if any – have occurred over time. The research aim is to show that social media texts have become journalistic tools of the trade for crisis reporting.

To account for longitudinal developments in journalistic practice, particularly with regard to the relationship between mainstream news, social media and participatory journalism, this thesis comparatively analyses media coverage of crisis events between 2005 and 2013, specifically:

- London Bombings (2005)
- England Riots (2011)
- Lee Rigby's murder (2013).

This is the first time these three crisis case studies have been analysed together through one media outlet. Tracking the evolution of *The Guardian*'s crisis reporting via these

events provides a benchmark for journalistic modelling at other publications.

Overview of case studies

The London Bombings occurred on July 7, 2005, less than 24 hours after the announcement that London would host the 2012 Olympic Games. After initial confusion about what had happened, with reports of "mysterious fires breaking out at the same time at several different locations" (Sageman 2019: 1), it was confirmed that four suicide bombers detonated bombs on three London Underground trains just before 9am and a double-decker bus in Tavistock Square an hour later (BBC 2005). These attacks killed 56 people (including the bombers) and injured more than 770 in a coordinated terrorist attack (BBC 2005). The public transport system was disabled and access to the underground bomb sites limited. Blast survivors and eyewitnesses became participatory journalists by documenting what was happening using mobile phones to take photographic and video footage. As Hermida explains:

> July 7 marked a turning point in how the news was made. That night, TV newscasts led with video taken by ordinary people rather than professional journalists, and the next day's newspapers were full of photos taken by the commuters themselves. It is now common to see jerky video shot on a cell phone by an eyewitness on the news. But in 2005, this was a novelty. (2014: 18)

In contrast to the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States less than four years earlier, the London Bombings signalled a turning point in the way the public participated in, and contributed to, crisis reporting. In 2001, people around the world were glued to their televisions and radios to watch and hear updates about what happened after the

planes hit the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York. As Barbie Zelizer and Allan explain: "…people scrutinised the [September 11] coverage intensely, to the point of suspending everyday routines so as to follow every nuance of the unfolding crisis" (2011: 4). In comparison, those wanting to know about London's 2005 terrorist attack were scanning the internet for updates, reading survivor blogs and watching amateur footage to find out what happened.

Six years after the bombings, violent riots broke out in London and a handful of cities in England's midlands and north. Precipitated by the police shooting and killing of Tottenham man Mark Duggan on August 4, 2011 (BBC, 2011), the riots started after Duggan's family and friends protested outside the Tottenham police station on August 6 demanding answers about his death. When police were slow to respond, the gathering escalated to a violent riot (Zhang 2013). Social media and social networking platforms Blackberry Messenger (BBM), Facebook and Twitter were used to post and share reports and updates about the riots. They were also used as tools to organise the riots and riot clean-ups around the country during the five days of the England Riots (Baker 2011; Lewis et al 2011). Commentators responding to the riots called for some social media platforms to be shut down (Lewis et al 2011) in a bid to stop the spread of riot-related information being disseminated. Despite this, *Guardian* journalist Paul Lewis and filmmaker Mustafa Khalili used social media to track and report on the riots. Lewis describes the crisis reporting further, using the riots as an example of its evolution:

> The first portal for communicating what we saw was Twitter. It enabled us to deliver real-time reports from the scene, but more importantly enabled other users of Twitter to provide constant feedback and directions to trouble spots. While journalists covering previous riots would chase ambulances to find the frontline, we followed what people on

social media told us. (2011)

By the time of the riots in 2011, social media had moved from being a minor factor to consider for crisis reporting to an important news platform, with both the public and professional journalists embracing it as a tool for research and reporting.

In May 2013, when British solider Lee Rigby was killed on a Woolwich street, social media had become such an accepted part of daily life for some users that Rigby's attacker expected to be filmed and planned for that footage to be broadcast widely. The attack on Rigby, and subsequent confession by one the attackers, were filmed and photographed by eyewitnesses and immediately shared via social media. This made headlines around the world due to the graphic nature of the content (Allan 2014; McEnery et al 2015; O'Neill 2015). Footage from those who captured the attack and confession at Woolwich was used by traditional media outlets later that day, and in the following days, with these outlets defending their right to use the material as it had already been published online (Allan 2014). Allan explained how this co-option of amateur user-generated content played out, despite the "attendant risks" (2014: 145). News organisations' "purposeful appropriation of this profusion of citizen imagery enabled them to narrativise component elements of a news story that would have been otherwise impossible to secure by professionals arriving on the scene afterwards" (Allan 2014: 145). The use of amateur recordings of the Lee Rigby murder show participatory journalism has become a more collaborative process, with traditional media outlets scanning social media platforms during crises in the same way a crime reporter may have once listened to a police scanner for leads. Professional journalists now actively seek out such texts as news sources in breaking stories.

Social media texts created by participatory journalists played a role as news sources in each of these three crises: video and photographs taken by victims and survivors were published in reports on the bombings; updates about the riots posted on social media platforms were quoted in traditional reporting; and videos and photographs taken of Lee Rigby's attackers by onlookers during and afterwards were also picked up by traditional UK and international media outlets reporting on the event. This thesis follows the crisis reportage of these three events in the major English (UK) newspaper *The Guardian*, investigating how the social media texts produced were incorporated into such reporting. While the *Guardian*'s reporting of the individual events provides a snapshot of media coverage and journalistic practice at the time of each crisis, collectively reportage from the three events offers an evolution in crisis reporting. This evolution highlights the significance of social media text use in crisis reporting and how the practice of journalism has developed through the use of social media texts as news sources.

The combination of eyewitnesses who can report directly from the scene of a crisis using their mobile devices, coupled with an audience's desire to know what is happening, has transformed the process of newsgathering during a crisis. Those connected to the internet, whether through a physical connection or via their smartphone or other mobile device, can watch a news story unfold in public in the online space. This practice of watching a story develop during breaking news events follows an iterative process that has become universally accepted. For example, the audience makes allowances for the quality of amateur eyewitness images, the fact that information is verified via crowdsourcing social

media users and the ways facts are checked, corrected and/or updated in later versions of reports. The relevance of social media texts within crisis reporting is explored throughout this thesis, with the research answering four key queries.

This thesis is governed by these research questions:

1. What is the significance of social media texts produced by members of the public being used as news sources in *The Guardian*'s traditional news reporting of the London Bombings, England Riots and Lee Rigby's murder?
2. How has professional journalistic practice at *The Guardian* evolved through the use of amateur social media texts in traditional print reporting of these three UK crisis events?
3. What influence does the use of participatory journalist-produced social media texts as news sources have on the quality of the *Guardian*'s crisis reporting during these three events?
4. How do *The Guardian*'s traditional newspaper journalists reporting on three UK crisis events verify the amateur social media texts they use as news sources?

Methodology

The Guardian's reporting of the three crises in the United Kingdom has been comparatively analysed for this thesis to determine the role social media plays in traditional reporting of crisis events (Daymon and Holloway 2010; Kolmer 2008). This

analysis tracks the evolution of journalistic practice by studying how the social media texts produced by participatory and traditional journalists were used in crisis reporting between 2005 and 2013, and the importance journalists place on such texts. Data gathered during this analysis informed the research interviews (Legard, Keegan and Ward 2003) with professional journalists and editors from *The Guardian* who were employed at the times of the three crises, and social media users whose texts were used in reporting of crisis events.

The professional journalists and editors participating in this thesis worked in the public domain at *The Guardian* at the time of each of the crisis events and the social media users posted information on public platforms during each event studied, putting their contributions into a wide public sphere. The Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network granted approval (reference number: H0014138) to interview these research participants. Participants provided consent for their name, position and comments to be used in this thesis. All personal and professional information was collected through consented interviews, which were transcribed and returned to each interviewee for further consent to use and publish.

Research participants were asked to reveal aspects of their media practices and editorial decision-making during the case study events (for the journalists) and motivations for sharing updates on social media (for social media users). As they discussed their work in reporting or documenting crisis events, it was understood the recollection could potentially traumatise the participant. If a research participant felt uncomfortable or

distressed, they were advised they could pause or discontinue the interview. Contact details for The Samaritans' confidential counselling and support services were included within the research study information sheet.

As this thesis references published social media texts, the ethics of end user agreements for the relevant platforms were reviewed. This ensured social media users whose texts are included in this thesis, but who had not granted consent to the researcher, were not harmed.

Project limitations

The idea to study journalistic attitudes around crisis event updates posted on social media, and how those texts are used by professional journalists to report on crises started forming when I was living in the UK in the aftermath of the London Bombings. While I was not working as a professional journalist in July 2005, I had been trained as a journalist and was working in a professional media capacity before and after the event. Like most, I found out about the London Bombings via traditional media and then researched media articles and content on the internet to find out more about the event. I also considered how I would have reported on the event, if called upon to do so. By the second event studied, in 2011, I was again working as a professional journalist, but in Australia, as well as being an avid social media user for personal and professional purposes. I combed social media platforms for information about the England Riots and Lee Rigby's murder and followed the events from the other side of the world. My interest

in how these events were depicted on social media and reported by journalists prompted my desire to research the topic in depth. The initial questions I had about the role social media played in crisis reporting were limited to my own interpretations of journalistic practice, however this thesis has enabled those ideas to form a more robust academic analysis.

In addition to the personal considerations, this project has a number of limitations relating to the news articles examined and the research interviews conducted. Since the articles studied were limited to one masthead in one location – *The Guardian* in England, UK – findings for this project do not necessarily represent journalistic practice when it comes to social media as a source at other mastheads, or in other countries. The professional journalists interviewed were a sample of *The Guardian*'s reporters and, as such, do not represent all professional journalists' views on this topic. In the same way, the social media users interviewed do not represent the views of all social media users. The London Bombings, England Riots and Lee Rigby's murder are not indicative of all crisis events, and so do not reflect journalistic reporting of all crises, however additional events are referenced throughout this thesis.

An understanding of professional journalistic practice formed the basis for interview questions and an understanding about how crisis reporting might be carried out in covering these events. The limited research sample of one masthead, selected journalists and social media users and three case studies from one country constrain the research analysis, but also provide insights into how future crisis reporting may be practiced using

content sourced from social media platforms.

Chapter overview

The collaboration between *The Guardian*'s professional journalists and social media users who share their insights during crises to cover major news events is discussed in depth during this thesis. These findings build an understanding of how social media texts are created and why they are important to traditional news storytelling.

Chapter Two reviews the current literature around journalistic practice and social media in relation to the general public's participation in crisis reporting through the lenses of speed, verification and ethics. This review looks at how journalistic practice has changed since the advent of the internet, with insight into the way social media texts are incorporated into traditional journalism generally, but also more specifically during the three major crisis events studied: London Bombings, England Riots and Lee Rigby's murder. The literature review chapter shows how this thesis contributes to academic research on journalistic practice, as well as identifying the gaps in crisis reporting literature around the use of social media texts.

Chapter Three explores how each of the four research questions, outlined above, are answered using data collected during semi-structured interviews (informed by content analysis of crisis reporting), and explains why this research approach was taken. Ethical considerations are also outlined in more detail within this chapter, along with an

explanation of data collection methods, the research participant sample, research design and the measures used to study the way traditional newspaper journalists use social media texts to report on crisis events.

The results from research conducted into *The Guardian* journalists' practice around sourcing content via social media platforms for the purpose of crisis reporting, and how this data relates to the current literature follow in Chapters Four and Five. The data presentation and analysis section is divided into two chapters: the first part introduces each of the three crisis case studies and presents the data relating to *The Guardian*'s coverage of each of these events. The second part explores journalistic practice in relation to speed, verification and ethics, answering the research questions. This discussion also looks at the implications of the research findings, including the role social media may play in future journalistic reporting of crisis events.

Chapter Six reiterates the research findings and theoretical contributions, discussing how these fit into newsroom practice at *The Guardian*, the study of journalistic practice and the use of social media texts in crisis reporting.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

For many of its users, social media has developed over more than a decade to become a reporting tool that enables them to share their experiences of significant events, including crises, instantly and from anywhere in the world. These texts fill news broadcasts, social media feeds and newspaper reportage as traditional media outlets work to cover the crisis as it develops, drawing on content from multiple sources. Seminal researchers Allan (2007; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2019) and Cottle (2009; 2011; 2013; 2014; 2019) have studied the way in which crisis reporting has developed through participatory journalism, and how this points to an overarching evolution within journalistic practice. This project sits within – and adds to – Allan's and Cottle's studies of the media, social media and crisis journalism.

The purpose of this review chapter is to address the literature surrounding the evolution of journalistic practice, particularly in relation to the influence of social media on this process when reporting on crisis events. As this thesis draws upon the experience and reflections of professional journalists reporting on three UK crisis events, critical examples of other reflections on crisis reporting are included within this literature review chapter. Revisiting similar crisis events and addressing the different perspectives presented by other scholars helps to enrich the wider understanding of crises overall. There is a rich tradition of studying alternative perspectives within the field of crisis

journalism, particularly when following the impact of social media technologies on the practice.

Beginning with the practice of journalism itself, this chapter uses current literature to demonstrate its development and show where participatory journalism fits within the practice. Researchers have studied how the internet has impacted journalism at length, including how this change has led to the formation of a more democratic model of journalism that invites audience participation (See for example Boaden 2008; Flew 2009; Goode 2009; McNair 2009; Robinson 2009). Print journalism was traditionally based on one-way communication, or in other words, journalists telling readers what they needed to know on a given subject (Adornato 2018). This model assumed the audience was passive, not playing an active role through participation or offering feedback on what was written beyond a letter to the editor (Gillmor 2003). However, social media enabled the audience to become involved in telling the news they were interested in. As Goode explains, "…in broad terms, citizen journalism feeds the democratic imagination largely because it fosters an unprecedented potential, at least, for news and journalism to become part of a conversation…" (2009: 1294). This conversation is a far more open one, but with that openness comes the shifting relationship between journalists and the audience (Adornato 2018). Such a scenario is part of the natural evolution that happens when the audience participates in the news – they discuss the implications of the event, argue their viewpoints on it and sometimes even contribute content to the story. The academic arguments for and against participatory journalism are addressed in this review, along with how this hybrid form of news reporting is still based inherently on the traditional

journalistic value of newsworthiness.

This evolution in journalistic practice has been hastened in the past two decades with the introduction of the internet and, more recently, social media (von Nordheim, Boczek, Koppers 2018; Holt and Karlsson 2015). These online platforms allow users to share information with their social networks (Peters and Allan 2018). Some of the studies explored in this chapter found such technology led to revolutionary changes in journalistic practice and the way news stories were reported, but also in the way traditional media outlets connected with readers and viewers on their preferred platforms by "meeting audiences where they were" (Lewis and Molyneux 2018: 11). Anyone with a mobile device that connects to the internet is able to tell the story of an event themselves as a participatory journalist or, at the very least, participate in the news-making process by contributing texts to the outlet. Rather than simply sharing their own updates, citizen journalists moved from publishing random events and anecdotes that interested them to sharing what they consider constituted news, with the aid of social media. Kristoffer Holt and Michael Karlsson explore this idea through their study of Swedish citizen journalists:

> Whereas initially, the news to be found within the blogosphere – and later on other social media – was characterized by vastness, incalculability, and stragglyness, some phenomena have appeared on the social media horizon that actively work to organize, concentrate, and stimulate the reporting of news by citizens online in a systematic way, resembling traditional news media in matters such as editorial influence, appearance, and ambition. (2015: 1796)

The Guardian embraced the idea of online journalism and using citizen journalist-produced reporting early. This publication's adaption to technology as a tool for journalism has been studied widely, with a focus on whether Twitter was a useful tool for

The Guardian's journalists (Ahmad 2010); the publication's "substantial" presence on social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook (Bastos 2015); its approach to participatory online journalism and audience engagement (Adams 2016); and how the newspaper published its news on Facebook and user interaction with that news (Bentivegna and Marchetti 2019).

Social media texts take on a greater degree of importance when it comes to covering crisis events, with the differences in reporting news and reporting on crises reviewed later in this chapter (Cottle 2019). The concept of eyewitnessing in relation to journalism and participatory journalism and how the definition of witnessing evolved as a result of technology is also examined. Finally, this chapter also looks at the research around the importance of verifying information before publishing content. The studies reviewed here address the elements of speed and accuracy during breaking news coverage, and assess the way social media texts from participatory journalists are tested for accuracy. This review includes literature on the differing standards between material published by traditional journalists and members of the public, especially during a news event like a crisis.

The evolving practice of journalism

As Banda Aceh locals and tourists were waking up on Boxing Day 2004, one of the biggest natural disasters was unfolding in the Indian Ocean (Bureau of Meteorology 2014). Starting off the Sumatran coast, an undersea earthquake measuring 9.0 on the

Richter scale produced a tsunami that ravaged parts of Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India and killed more than 200,000 people. The impact of the tsunami was felt 4500km away in Somalia, Africa, but the devastation was concentrated most in Indonesia's Aceh province. It was this major crisis event – where people on the ground in Aceh told the unfolding story first – that saw online media stamp its authority as a fast, relevant and worthy source of news.

In his review of the way traditional media reported the tsunami event, former *Guardian* editor Peter Preston grappled with the significance of online media sources for traditional newspapers (2005). Citing traditional media's heavy reliance on online material in its coverage as a turning point for the institution, Preston's words foreshadowed a change that had already begun in the way the public participated in news production. In his editorial published just days after the natural disaster took place, Preston says the audience was as much a reader and viewer as they were a "correspondent" during the tsunami, keeping in touch in conventional and digital ways (2005). This event signalled a "quantum shift" where "the world shrinks in an instant", which meant "news desks, maybe will never be the same again" (2005). Preston's words illustrate that news stories do not break to a set timetable. When the global legacy media outlets were taking advantage of the slow news days over the Christmas break, thousands of participatory journalists were 'on the job' reporting on the vast impact of the tsunami in Aceh, and further afield. It was the multimedia content from these participatory journalists that became hot property; major media outlets from around the world used these texts to tell a hungry audience what had happened.

The Indian Ocean earthquake and subsequent tsunami in Aceh had traditional media outlets playing catch up to online news sources, most of whose content came from the general public (Zeng et al 2019). Instead of a local journalist or a foreign correspondent dispatched to report from the scene, thousands of people were sharing their own experiences via blogs, video, photographs and text messages (Waldman 2005), making this event a turning point in not only participatory journalism, but for journalistic practice as a whole. Waldman says:

> While traditional media tried to come to grips with this complex evolving story, text messages, blog posts, photographs and video clips appeared online, bringing us thousands of people's firsthand experiences of the horrific event. As viewer or reader, one could not fail to be moved nor impressed by how this enormous amount and range of content was created, disseminated and consumed instantly and effortlessly by people living in every region of the world. (2005)

As Preston (2005) and Waldman (2005) both comment, traditional media found itself in a confronting situation where it was reliant on contributed content to tell this horrific story, as well as making up the rules of engagement in using such content as the hours went along. Allan's seminal research on citizen witnessing (2013) supports Waldman's (2005) analysis of the change in journalism resulting from audience participation during this event. He found that the term "citizen journalism" took hold after the 2004 tsunami, "when news organisations found themselves in the awkward position of being largely dependent on 'amateur' reportage to tell the story of what had transpired on the ground" (2013: 9). No longer are readers, viewers and consumers waiting for the news to be presented to them; instead the Indian Ocean tsunami shows how participatory journalists can set the news agenda in reporting on that crisis event, and how traditional media outlets followed.

Drawing on gatekeeping theory (Ferrucci and Tandoc 2017), the Indian Ocean tsunami presented a situation where journalism's established value around who decides what is, and is not, news was turned on its head. Instead of traditional journalists and editors following a lead and deciding which aspect of the tsunami story to cover, who to interview and which photographic and video imagery to use, those decisions were taken out of the professionals' hands and instead made by the participatory journalists on the ground. Rather than professional journalists producing news for an audience, amateur reporters were producing news content they knew would appeal their networks, but the texts appealed to traditional media outlets that needed help telling that story as well. Extending the relevance of gatekeeping theory and strengthening the idea of audience as gatekeeper, Vos and Russell (2019) present another actor that enables this changing power relationship: technology platforms, namely social media. Arguing that Silicon Valley has become an "institutional influence" on news construction by deciding how content is distributed on such platforms, Vos and Russell show that audiences and journalists share gatekeeping roles because "[c]itizens may post or share content on the same terms as journalists on platforms" (2019: 2340). Further to this, the ways in which social media platforms use algorithmic factors to decide which items to present to users, and when, leads to journalists and editors considering how a story might perform online in ranking its newsworthiness. While social media algorithms is not a topic covered in depth within this thesis, it is highlighted here as one factor at play in the hybrid journalism model, and evidence of technology's impact on the evolution of journalism.

Rusbridger's 2010 article on why Twitter should matter to media outlets addressed both the journalist and the audience as gatekeeper when he wrote about the social media platform as a distribution, aggregation and reporting tool. He says Twitter is "a highly effective way of spreading ideas, information and content" that can also concurrently harness "the mass capabilities of human intelligence to the power of millions in order to find information that is new, valuable, relevant or entertaining". However, confirming the point Vos and Russell (2019) made above, Rusbridger celebrates that Twitter users have different news values to journalists, explaining that "the power of tens of thousands of people articulating those different choices can wash back into newsrooms and affect what editors choose to cover" (2010). The studies investigating how *The Guardian* embraced online content produced by participatory journalists, coupled with Rusbridger's comments on Twitter above, touch on how social media platforms can be used by professional journalists but do not explain how the texts on those platforms are specifically incorporated into crisis reporting. The three case studies outlined later in this thesis explain how such texts are shared, sourced, verified and incorporated into reportage on each of the three events.

Staying with social media's influence on journalism, writer and press freedom activist Smári McCarthy (2012) tweeted that, "Journalism used to be about gathering information and presenting it. Now everybody does that, so journalism must change". McCarthy's opinion, expressed in less than 140 characters, reflects popular views on the state of journalism at the time, with this thesis examining how journalism has changed as a result.

In Deuze's (1999) study of online journalism, he found the internet had the potential to change how journalists worked and their role, as well as the medium they used. He says:

> The internet is changing the profession of journalism in at least three ways: it has the potential to make the journalist's role as the essential intermediary force in democracy more or less superfluous; it offers the media professional a vast array of resources and sheer endless technological possibilities to work with; and it has created its own type of journalism on the Net: so-called *digital* or *online* journalism. (1999: 373)

While some elements within the practice of journalism have changed and evolved in the past few decades, such as the tools used and how media output is consumed, the guiding principles that traditional news journalists practice when gathering and presenting information to tell a news story have not. These principles include reporting the truth independently, ethically, objectively and responsibly, and they are still as relevant as ever in current news journalism. Indeed, with the influx of content consumed online from a vast array of sources, professional and amateur, it could be argued these principles of journalism are more important now than ever.

As highlighted using gatekeeping theory above, the internet, technology platforms and social media have also added to the variety and number of sources available to traditional journalists, as well as the differing ways in which these news stories can be told via media websites and blogs. Traditional values used by journalists in determining whether information is newsworthy are unchanged, but social media has added additional elements to the discussion around what is newsworthy, as mentioned previously. Sarah Gillman (2011) addresses the idea of newsworthiness within traditional media newsrooms, saying, "…professionals working in news apply the following characteristics

to pieces of information to decide whether they are newsworthy: impact, proximity, prominence, human interest, novelty, conflict and currency" (2011: 246). Mervi Pantti, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Cottle studied how disasters are mediated, and found, "…the use of audience material – even if it democratizes aspects of news production – remains firmly embedded within existing logics and hierarchies of news production" (2012: 59). The traditional news values Gillman (2011) and Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen and Cottle (2012) outlined are still inherent within journalistic practice now, despite changes in the way news is told and consumed that have been brought about through technology.

The internet, through online media outlets and social media, has made discovering what is happening around the world an instantly gratifying, even commonplace, experience (Hofman, Reinecke and Meier 2016). When internet users are looking for information about an event of international significance, like a crisis, news searching, information sharing and reporting instincts go into overdrive (Stieglitz, Bunker, Mirbabaie and Ehnis 2017). When news of a major crisis event broke pre-internet, those interested in finding out more waited for the next hourly radio news bulletin or that night's television news program to confirm the reports (Boyd 2001: xvii). Now the first instinct is to go online and type key terms into search engines or social media platforms to find out what has happened instantly (Nee 2019: 179). The crisis location presents no barriers because there will be someone – whether they are a professional news or a participatory journalist – documenting the event (Hughes and Palen 2018). Indeed, Allan introduces the practice of worldwide crisis reporting by saying, "[i]mages of global crisis are a routine, everyday feature of our news media" (in Cottle, 2009: xiii). The interconnected nature of society's

communication and news consumption via the internet now transforms any significant crisis into a global event. News coverage of global crises today can cross the world in a matter of seconds through technological devices. Cottle studied how the media reports on global crises and found the need to share information with online connections generates interest globally. In his (2013: xi) words, "[w]e live in a global age. We inhabit a world that has become radically interconnected, interdependent, and communicated in the formations and flows of the media. This same world also spawns proliferating, often interpenetrating, 'global crises'". As society becomes more connected, the understanding of events happening nearby, and internationally, broadens through such connections. News of a crisis, and how its implications unfold over hours, days, weeks and years, takes on more significance through the sharing of experiences and opinions globally.

Taking the idea of an interconnected society a step further, the constantly 'switched on' nature of online media means events like crises are both "mediated and mediatized" (Cottle 2011: 79). Anyone with a mobile device that is connected to the internet has the capacity to report on an event, and crises are on the list of newsworthy events worth sharing in this socially connected world. As Cottle explains in his study on global crises in the news, "[t]he unprecedented global surveillance capacity of modern media systems and networks now enables ordinary citizens to both capture and communicate as well as bear witness to scenes of human suffering and atrocity from around the world" (2011: 88). Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen and Cottle (2012) explore how ordinary citizens capture information in relation to disaster reporting on a global scale. The authors say:

> Hybrid applications based on crowdsourcing technologies, new social media and mobile-telephony have further proved to be powerful communication tools, enhancing the work

> of emergency services, communicatively enfranchising some survivors and encouraging new forms of civil society involvement through new tech-savvy voluntary and technical communities… (2012: 198)

It is clear from Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen and Cottle's research that the combination of social media platforms and smartphones used by an audience creates the ability to produce crowdsourced news. This collaborative storytelling has potential beyond journalism, but can be harnessed by media outlets, especially during crises. It is the specific situation presented by three crisis events, and how crowdsourced news on those events develops on the path to being published, that this thesis explains further. The myriad ways information now flows between countries, cultures, devices and through people as both news consumers and news producers, instills crisis reporting with new angles, voices and viewpoints that change constantly.

Audience participation in journalistic practice

Social media that is connected to a global audience and people acting as participatory journalists by reporting from the scene of an event are a powerful combination. This amalgamation of technology and a person's ability to share and add context to that newsworthy event really comes into play when a major crisis, such as a natural disaster or a terrorist attack, strikes. As illustrated through the reporting of the Indian Ocean tsunami, in the midst of the mayhem surrounding a crisis, someone's photos or video from the ground can tell the story long before a news journalist has arrived on the scene. Allan (2013) explains there is power in people telling the stories that are affecting their own

communities. He says:

> Journalism by the people for the people is to be heralded for its alternative norms, values and priorities. It is raw, immediate, independent and unapologetically subjective, making the most of the resources of web-based initiatives – collective intelligence, crowdsourcing, wiki collaboration and the like, within and across diverse, evolving virtual communities – to connect, interact and share first-hand, unauthorized forms of journalistic activity promising fresh perspectives. (2013: 94)

A text about an event produced by someone from within that community can add additional context in storytelling, adding to the rich layering that multiple voices can provide. Social media platforms allow the broadcast and dissemination of information to reach the masses online, providing a highly accessible tool from which both news journalists and participatory journalists can report from the scene of an event.

Much has already been written about participatory journalism and whether the involvement of "the people formerly known as the audience," has improved the practice of journalism or not (Rosen 2008). Audience members have participated in news production for decades through such avenues as letters to the editor and interviews where they were called on to share their opinion on a popular topic, but it cannot be denied that media production technology has blurred the traditional boundaries between the positions, and definitions, of news producers and consumers. By the early 2000s the development of digital technologies had advanced to the point where many citizens had the power of a mobile recording device in their hands in the form of camera-enabled mobile phones. "Armed with cellphones, BlackBerries or iPhones", observes Don Peat (2010) from the *Toronto Sun*, "the average Joe" was now a "walking eye on the world, a citizen journalist, able to take a photo, add a caption or a short story and upload it to the

Internet for all their friends, and usually everyone else, to see".

Deuze, Axel Bruns and Christoph Neuberger define participatory journalism as, "…any kind of newswork at the hands of professionals and amateurs, of journalists and citizens, and of users and producers…" in their research on how the institution of journalism prepared for the audience taking a more involved role in telling the news (2007: 323). The authors studied journalistic practice in Australia, the United States, Germany and the Netherlands and found that some news is gathered, edited and shared by amateurs, or participatory journalists, alongside the professional work of traditional journalists. Delving further into the relationships between participatory and traditional news journalism, the authors understand that "…increasingly mainstream news is taking note of what the citizen journalists are saying, and uses content generated by users as an alternative to vox-pops, opinion polls, or in some cases indeed as a partial replacement of editorial work" (2007: 335). When Iranians protested the 2009 elections, both traditional and citizen journalists live-blogged these crisis events using social media and blogging platforms. Matthew Weaver covered the same protests for *The Guardian* over 10 days and saw a technological hierarchy develop when it came to incoming information about the events. He explains: "…first the tweets come, then the pictures, then the YouTube videos, then the wires…what people are saying at one point in the day is then confirmed by more conventional sources four or five hours later" (Weaver cited in Stelter 2009). Weaver's comments of how protest reports were published first on social media, with traditional media following, supports Rusbridger's later comments about the value of Twitter that were mentioned above. This idea of news breaking on social media is

interrogated further through the research interviews conducted with journalists and social media users for this project to better understand how this practice is incorporated into the process of crisis reporting.

Andy Carvin came to international prominence when he covered the 2010 Tunisian revolution on Twitter. Carvin was heavily reliant on contributed content when covering the Arab Spring, much of it coming from amateurs at the scene, which he verified and curated for his global audience. He continued with this practice, collaborating with online sources to "tweet revolutions" and then launched news service Reported.ly in 2014 (Garcia de Torres and Hermida 2017). Carvin explains, "[f]or those of us working within mainstream media, the challenge was taking the strengths of traditional journalism and combining them with the real-time, Wild West nature of the social media landscape" (2012: 15). While Carvin describes the flood of content that appeared on Twitter during the Arab Spring as having a 'Wild West' outlaw feel, it was actually this surge in information from around the globe that made the crisis reporting during this time as powerful and compelling as it was. Carvin explains this international collaborative process further:

> …a group of people scattered around the world took a break from whatever they were doing to become detectives. They put on their thinking caps and collected various bits of information working together to come up with the answer. Did they do it better than a professional journalist would have? Not necessarily. But the simple act of working together made them more discerning online citizens. They gave back to the Internet – and in turn made us all better informed. (2012: 156)

This practice gives rise to questions around whether the medium used to publish information and the level of knowledge possessed about the event matter more than

sharing the information at all when someone documents what is happening around them. The obvious question that follows those initially posed is whether what is being shared is true. It is at this point that traditional news values around verification kick in. Gowing takes up this query, explaining the imperative should be gaining the correct information rather than who it came from:

> In a moment of crisis what is the difference – if any – between the staff reporter who observes, writes, blogs then files an article for an established media organisation, and the motivated amateur or quasi professional who does exactly the same for a web or blog site? (2009: 40)

Technology, and our attitude towards it, has changed the way crises are reported. The coming chapters investigate the specific ways crisis reporting evolved at *The Guardian* over eight years.

Extending the line of audience participation in news events further, some media outlets, such as Al Jazeera and *The Guardian*, have worked to establish and build relationships with citizens who actively post content online with the view that these sources will provide viable content when something relevant happens. Al Jazeera gave activists lightweight Flip cameras (Newman 2011: 38) and GuardianWitness built a community of willing contributors who shared content on a host of assignments from international crisis events to recipes. Iris Zaki's 'op-doc' *Natural Born Settlers* (2019) is an example of how crisis reporting has developed into a deeper form of storytelling when community contributions are used. To gain a greater understanding of Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories Zaki moved from her home in Tel Aviv and immersed herself in a camp in Tekoa for the summer. In her words: "Once I settled in, I set up a small cafe and

waited for company" (Zaki 2019). The company Zaki mentioned were people aged mainly in their 30s, like the journalist herself was. It was through their recorded conversations she was able to paint a picture of community living with violence on a daily basis, such as stabbings, shootings and bombings. In summing up her experience of living within this community, Zaki told one of her interview subjects: "On the one hand, I learned a lot about the people here. Some do talk about harmony with the people around them. I wanted to listen, to show what's underneath the stereotypes" (2019). Through watching Zaki immerse herself in a community so opposed to her own beliefs, her viewers gained a much greater understanding of the what is was like to grow up in a camp on the West Bank. As Zaki herself says:

> The act of becoming a settler, however briefly (and against my own political ideology), allowed for a rare intimacy to emerge between camera and subject. Only through this discomfort is it possible to reach something deeper, and more essential, about Israel's fractured society, but also, in a wider context, about trying to establish an honest dialogue between people of different perspectives. (2019)

While not a fast-moving event, Zaki's crisis reporting shows how such in-depth research and extended reporting leads to a greater understanding about what happened and what it means, which benefits news consumers because a fuller story is presented. This thesis is not looking to define the development of participatory journalism at length; rather it concentrates on how the material produced by people acting in the role of participatory journalist is utilised by traditional journalists, particularly when reporting on crisis events. As such, studies discussing the intersection of traditional and participatory journalism with technology are reviewed in this chapter.

Technology and journalism

The impact of technology on journalism has led to questions around whether the media has become more democratic because the audience now participates in news production. As I show through analysis of research data later in this thesis, the public participation in London Bombings coverage brought about a collaborative approach to reporting on this crisis that flattened the journalistic hierarchy. This impact can be seen with the cooperation between the BBC and participatory journalists to produce the bombings coverage, as Sambrook explains:

> Our reporting on this story was a genuine collaboration, enabled by consumer technology – the camera phone in particular – and supported by trust between broadcaster and audience. And the result was transformational in its impact: We know now that when major events occur, the public can offer us as much new information as we are able to broadcast to them. From now on, news coverage is a partnership. (2005)

By considering this coverage a "collaboration", Sambrook points to a dynamic interplay between journalists and citizens, in which content is co-created. Essentially, the consumers had content the media outlets needed, setting the scene for an occurrence in crisis reporting, based on trust and authenticity, that has played out in successive crisis events since. This rhetoric surrounding the significance of the bombings crisis, reflects the declaration that it was a "turning point" in journalism, by Douglas (2006), who reviewed the media's coverage of the London bombings on the first anniversary of the attacks. "Dramatic stills and video sequences from passengers on the Tube trains led the BBC *Six O'Clock News* bulletin", he observes, "the first time such material had been deemed more newsworthy than the professionals' material" (Douglas 2006). While the

amateur coverage of the London bombings may be classed as 'accidental journalism' (Allan 2013) in that the role of the journalist was played by those who were involved in the event, what transpired on 7 July 2005 marked a watershed: the point at which "newsgathering had changed forever" (Boaden 2008). In Boaden's words: "No one who set off for work that fateful morning had any idea that their mobile phones would capture such dramatic images" (2008). July 7, 2005 was a day when the public participated in the news like few others. Similarly, O'Neill says the reporting of the London bombings showed a significant development in journalistic practice – both professional and amateur – more broadly:

> From deep underground, or while leaving the scene, victims and witnesses were taking pictures, posting them, sending texts, emailing and phoning in eyewitness accounts to mainstream media organisations and to friends and bloggers around the world. This had happened before, but never on the scale or with the effectiveness achieved in London…Until then, 'citizen journalism' was an idea. It was the future, some people said. After London, it had arrived. (2005)

As Ferrara explains, the post London bombings media landscape presented a collaborative approach to crisis reporting: "No longer is the conversation in journalism about whether we are going to use citizen-produced material, but how we are going to use it" (2005).

In the wake of the bombings event Flew (2009) questions whether media democratisation has occurred as a result of convergent media and online media. He uses examples of online journalism in Australia, such as brisbanetimes.com.au, public broadcasters ABC and SBS and international citizen blogging sites, such as Assignment Zero, Off the Bus, You Decide, OhMyNews, Huffington Post and Crikey, to illustrate his argument. Flew

explains that, "[w]hat has been changing is the renewed expectation of participation as a component of media consumption, and the right to access media in a range of ways and to re-use, re-purpose, modify and manipulate it according to one's own wishes," in defining a more participatory media model (2009: 108). Although Flew shows some publications have managed the participation model successfully, these do not meet the desire for democratic media that has been touted in other studies. Taking the concept of media democratisation further, Watson (2013) argues that there are two models those who produce content in fall into: dependent and independent reporting. These models distinguish between the ways an amateur reporter approaches a story, Watson says:

> The primary distinction here is that dependent citizen journalism relies on existing professional news organisations for the distribution and publication of information, whereas independent citizen journalists utilise their own forms of communication for the self-publication of material. (2013: 220)

The England Riots and Lee Rigby's murder, which followed the bombings, illustrate the evolution of the more democratic and collaborative reporting approach mentioned here. Journalism's shift from the 20th century mass communication media model to the 21st century social media model shows there is more audience involvement now. The distinction between the models outlined above also draws on Singer's definition of participatory journalism, where people within, and external to the newsroom, create news and community concurrently around an event (2011: 2).

In studying how the newspaper *The Spokesman-Review* moved from a printed version to be published online, including the impact of greater reader involvement in the news process, Sue Robinson (2009) argues that this model adds to the journalistic experience.

Both readers and journalists told and broadcast news stories in *The Spokesman-Review*'s new cyber newsroom, which Robinson found created a more democratic newsroom model. She says, "[o]nline theorists have hypothesized that Internet's multimedia and interactivity will provide a more 'real' news experience by allowing readers to participate in the journalism" (2009: 403-404). A more participatory model of journalism, as outlined above by Flew (2009) and Robinson's (2009) examples, has enjoyed success around the world, with many media outlets inviting audience members to contribute content and help shape the news. Examples include GuardianWitness[2], which closed after five years of operation; CNN's iReport[3] and ProPublica's Get Involved program[4]. While not a specific user-generated program, the BBC's Have Your Say section[5] invites its audience to contribute content and ideas, with areas where the audience can "Watch your stories" and "Share your views and experiences on these stories".

Participatory journalism offers the opportunity for the audience to become co-creators in the process of news production. Seth Lewis, Kelly Kaufhold and Dominic Lasorsa's 2010 study of Texan newspaper editors found that those who supported participatory journalism saw it as a way of building a better relationship with their audiences. This study found the editors encouraged readers to contribute story ideas, photographs, participate in online polls and share their expertise through columns (2010: 175-176). Lewis, Kaufhold and Lasorsa (2010) say the editors, "saw real practical advantages and

[2] witness.theguardian.com
[3] edition.cnn.com/CNNI/Programs/ireport/
[4] propublica.org/getinvolved
[5] bbc.com/news/have_your_say

philosophical reasons for easing restrictions at the gate in order to make the news more of a participatory process than a static product". Bradshaw and Rohumaa add further insight to this idea, explaining how the audience wants to be involved in news events:

> Users also increasingly want communal experiences; to interact with journalists and others affected in real time. Live blogging really took off with the rise of micro blogging services such as Twitter, which allowed reporters, witnesses and experts to provide real-time updates on news developments without having to write formal news stories or blog posts. (2011)

The technological tools outlined in the examples above show journalism is becoming more inclusive through traditional media outlet's invitations for audience participation. Lewis and Nikki Usher (2013) take this argument further by presenting an open source model for journalism. Their model has journalism becoming a more fluid process, with both journalists and audience members using technological tools and platforms to contribute to the end news product. Both parties are building the "software" (2013: 609) of news by accessing knowledge and adding, monitoring and supervising content. In the words of the Mozilla Foundation, "[n]ews should be universally accessible across phones, tablets, and computers. It should be multilingual. It should be rich with audio, video, and elegant data visualization. It should enlighten, inform, and entertain people, and it should make them part of the story" (in Lewis and Usher, 2013: 612). In their study, Lewis and Usher (2013) position the audience within the news story, concurrently part of the news creation and storytelling processes. This concept points to a new way of practicing journalism, however it is a model many media organisations hesitated to embrace before they understood how it fitted within their traditional offerings.

The convergent journalism model between journalists and their audience has also been

researched by Peter Berglez (2013). In outlining how he sees the future of professional news journalism unfolding, he asks: "How could news on the web include a (global) plurality of voices/sources by means of increasing interactivity between professional news journalism and citizen journalism/social media?" (2013: 11). The answer to this question is in the way traditional news journalists and participatory journalists interact and work together to contribute to the ongoing flow of news. News stories where traditional news journalists and participatory journalists are both contributing content have wide appeal to audiences because more, and varied, voices are used. Suellen Tapsall investigates these changes in journalistic practice further, explaining that traditional journalists are not the sole practitioners for news production anymore:

> No longer is the journalist responsible for the entire reporting process from interview to written story… The unbundling of the journalists' roles sees the further breaking down of the news process to a series of steps or component parts – with the ownership of each up for grabs. News content and packaging are more clearly segregated. One person or group is responsible for getting interviews, sound, or vision (the content) that is then distributed to partners or purchasers for packing into print, radio, television, or on-line news stories. (2001: 251)

In other words, news is not simply broadcast by traditional journalists to readers, but is now created and consumed concurrently by both parties. While this shows the impact of technology on journalism introduces more storytellers to the mix (professional and amateur), with each taking on separate roles to collaborate on and share the stories as a whole, the types of technology and specific impacts on crisis reporting are not explored in detail within this literature. Each case study presented here shows the technologies used by *Guardian* journalists and how this has changed the newspaper's crisis reporting process.

Participatory journalists as crisis reporters

Pantti's 2013 study on crisis reporting and participatory media provides an important grounding in how news consumers make sense of the information shared by those who are reporting from the scene of a crisis, whether they are a traditional or a participatory journalist. Not all information reported and shared as a crisis unfolds will be polished and produced by traditional media outlets. Some images will be shot from awkward angles, spelling will not always be correct and lighting might be too dark or too bright. As Pantti explains: "Citizen eyewitness images have become common in mainstream media outlets to the point that today we expect to see images with distinct 'amateur aesthetics' in media representations of disasters, uprisings, wars and other unsettled events" (2013: 202). The ability of this eyewitness material to be disseminated at speed from mobile devices like smartphones and tablets means that news coverage of global crises can cross the world in a matter of seconds through mobile technological devices (Mortensen, Allan and Peters 2017). This information contributes to the pool of source material being broadcast from, and about, the crisis and, as such, can be picked up by media outlets following the event from anywhere.

The technological advances that enable participatory journalists to broadcast information about an event via social media dramatically affects traditional journalistic practice when it comes to media coverage of a crisis. Pantti (2013) and Cottle (2013) both studied how the consumption of amateur images and other media texts that are shared by participatory journalists during crisis events gives the impression that the audience is there beside the

amateur reporter. Pantti explains this effect by saying, "[t]he increasing flow of citizen-created images has taken the mainstream media reporting of distant crisis to a new stage, offering an unforeseen sense of proximity to the coverage" (2013: 214). The boundaries between professional and amateur reporting of news events becomes blurred, as information sourced from participatory journalists became more prevalent in crisis event coverage. Cottle discusses this evolving delineation between professional and amateur reporting:

> The professional frontiers of journalism are themselves becoming increasingly porous with the rise of a new social media and citizen journalists who now inject a flood of images and ideas from afar, sometimes into mainstream news agendas and/or bypassing traditional news gatekeepers all together. (2013: xii)

It is during a globally significant event like a crisis where the issues of 'porous' boundaries between professional and participatory journalism are less important, because the need to know what is happening surpasses all other arguments.

Use of the internet, and particularly social media, has changed the way news of crises have been broken and shared globally. Nicola Bruno (2011), Hermida (2012), Val Colic-Peisker, Masa Mikola and Karien Dekker (2016) and Cassie McLinden and Elaine Barclay (2018) all researched the use of Twitter in reporting during crises, namely the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks, 2010 Haiti earthquake and the 2014 Sydney siege. As Bruno explains, "…social media are not just a resource to be exploited when there are no reporters on the ground but also a tool which can greatly improve the news-reporting process during crisis events" (2011: 64). Similarly, Hermida found that:

> Twitter has also been adopted as a mechanism for user-generated content, tapped by news organizations for gathering eyewitness reports as events unfold in real-time. Real-time messages from the public are seen as filling the news vacuum that tends to characterize the immediate aftermath of a breaking news event. (2012: 663)

As started earlier in this thesis, a crisis event, more than any other situation, focuses audience attention and the need for constant news updates. Amateur content can play an important part in both enhancing what is being produced by professional journalists, but also by adding context to that professional storytelling.

The Boston bombings crisis illustrated the extent to which texts posted on social media by accidental and amateur journalists have become a vital part of reporting such events. News of the bombings at the finishing line of the 2013 Boston Marathon broke on social media up to an hour before a traditional media outlet covered the attack (Wenberg 2013; Qu 2013) with others at the scene posting messages on Twitter and Facebook to tell friends and relatives they were safe after the attacks (Bhat 2013). The subsequent manhunt for the Boston bombers, live-tweeted by journalist Seth Mnookin (@sethmnookin), showed how Twitter could be used as a research tool, source and reporting medium concurrently (Devine 2013). When Mnoonkin live-tweeted the capture of one of the alleged Boston bombers (2013), he used his training and experience as a journalist to tell a news story, but Twitter was his medium. Mnoonkin acted as both the source *and* the journalist, sharing his insights and reportage from the crisis event. His texts became news sources for other journalists reporting on the Boston bombings, but this was after they had already been a source of news for Mnoonkin's followers, who had watched the event unfold via his tweet stream. In showing how crisis events marry

traditional and social media, Mnoonkin says:

> There is a reflexive reaction to pit emergent social media behavior against traditional journalistic practices and norms. This defensive posture is counterproductive, for both sides. Rather than pointing out flaws to favor one model over the other, we should appreciate the interplay between them, an interdependence that ultimately produces a more participatory, accurate and compelling news cycle. (2013)

As Devine explains, “Social media came into its own during the hunt for the Boston bombers. The epic rolling story of the hunt for the Boston bombers has been an extraordinary exercise in 21st century media” (2013: 44).

Documentary *The Thread* (Barker 2015) investigates the impact amateur reporting had on the manhunt for the Boston bombers. A thread on Reddit about the bombings quickly turned into a haven for the internet’s would-be sleuths who wanted to help identify the bombers. The frenzy of online activity on Reddit and Twitter in the days following the bombings was a mix of information and misinformation, with the film arguing that social media has changed the way crises like this are reported. Consider, for example, college student Kevin Cheetham who witnessed the bombings at the marathon's end and tweeted what he saw. Now ensconced in the story, Cheetham continued to follow updates on Twitter and via a police scanner and even went to Watertown to follow the manhunt. Cheetham says, “I wanted answers and no one had them so I went to get them myself” (Barker 2015). Cheetham stationed himself in a mall parking lot as the manhunt continued around him and posted updates to Twitter via @KevCheetham. He used his iPad to record the police press conference after the manhunt concluded: “Right in the front of all the reporters was a freshman college student. Here I am standing next to them

and spreading the news in a different format" (Cheetham in Barker 2015). Crisis reporting has developed from a situation where traditional media was forced to use contributed content by accidental journalists to report on the London bombings, out of necessity, to the proactively collaborative model used during the Boston bombings – and beyond. The Boston bombings scenario featuring Cheetham and his fellow amateur reporters shows there has been a change in journalism when it comes to crisis reporting, but that change is less to do with practice and more to do with the tools available to complete the work. Coupled with Twitter being used to break news stories like the plane crash in the Hudson, Bin Laden's capture and Rigby's murder, the Boston bombings case shows Twitter to be a key tool for 21st century journalism.

The crisis that unfolded in Sydney's Martin Place before Christmas 2014 provides a relevant parallel to the three events studied for this project, as social media was a major news source of both reliable information and unsubstantiated rumours on the event. Indeed, as Cornelius Puschmann et al found, "Twitter's embeddedness in everyday social and communicative interactions … provides a window on contemporary society" when they answered the question of why scholars should study Twitter (2013: 427). This finding is confirmed by Benjamin Archie (2016), who researched the way social media affected how the Sydney Siege played out, saying "…the public's real-time Twitter reporting of a terrorist event has the potential to endanger the public, victims and police and prolong the event, enhancing the publicity of the perpetrators' political messages". As Archie found social media, namely Twitter, played an important role during the Sydney Siege by allowing users to 'report' the live event as it occurred, even though such reports

could have endangered lives and extended the crisis. Emily Bell sums up the impact of Twitter succinctly in her blog post for *The Guardian*: "There is journalism before Twitter and journalism after Twitter. No single company has ever had the power to report and disseminate events with the speed and geographic reach of the network" (2015). In 2004 the Indian Ocean tsunami showed early instances of social media working its way into the media's coverage of crisis events. Just over six months later when London's July 2005 underground train and bus bombings happened, news consumers were already primed to expect the media coverage to include reporting from participatory journalists at the scene. Crisis reporting has developed from a situation where traditional media was forced to use contributed content by accidental journalists to report on the London bombings, out of necessity, to the proactive collaborative model used during the Boston bombings and Rigby's murder – and beyond.

Studies of participatory journalists' contributions during the London bombings by Allan (2007; 2013) and Nuria Lorenzo-Dus and Annie Bryan (2011) found news media quoted passengers' personal blogs and online diaries. Some professional journalists were train and bus passengers on the day of the attacks and they reported their experiences (Allan 2007), however the majority of eyewitness texts used in media reports about the bombings came from amateurs because traditional journalists could not access the scenes. As Allan explains:

> The immediate aftermath of the bombs that exploded in London on 7 July destroying three underground trains and a bus, leaving 56 people dead and over 700 injured, was thoroughly recorded by citizens making use of digital technologies. Mobile-telephone cameras captured the scene of fellow commuters trapped underground, with many of the resultant images resonating with what some aptly described as an eerie, even claustrophobic, quality. Video clips taken with cameras were judged to be all the more

> compelling because they were dim, grainy, shaky, and – even more important- because they were documenting an angle on an event as it was actually happening. (2013: 93)

Media coverage of this crisis event also included traditional media outlets reproducing photos and videos that passengers recorded at the scene on their mobile phones. The London bombings happened before the advent of the social media platforms that form the focus of this study, however they show the importance of visual representation in crisis reporting. As George Lazaroiu says, "[o]nline media have increased their dependency on visual content", and this characteristic also points to the development of participatory journalists reporting on crisis events (2010: 103).

Adding to the body of work about participatory journalism's role in reporting on the 2005 London bombings, Andy Williams, Claire Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen's important 2011 study into the BBC's use of user-generated content (UGC) shows that the media institution realised the value of using material submitted by its audience during that crisis event. As a result, the BBC expanded its UGC Hub, with the authors explaining: "…the Hub is at its most valuable during major UGC-rich stories such as terror attacks or extreme weather events" (2011: 89). Such events prompt people at the scene to document and share what they are seeing; they are bearing witness and attempting to make sense of the crisis for themselves as well those who will see their content. There is a growing bank of evidence showing the role amateurs play in breaking news of major events, with Jason Bainbridge, Carolyn Beasley and Liz Tynan (2011) researching how participatory journalists tweeted photos and information during the Mumbai terrorist attacks, Iranian elections and the US Airways plane crashing into New York's Hudson River. The authors

say Twitter's usefulness as a "tool of citizen journalism" became apparent during the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks, but came into its own as an important addition to the journalism kit during the Iran elections and the emergency plane landing on New York's Hudson River in 2009, for "communication of immediate and hitherto inaccessible on-the-street information" (2011: 365). This blog, video, photographic and Twitter content that was used in sharing information about the events cited above are early examples that illustrate the way traditional media outlets used social media texts after they were shared by participatory journalists. Social media platforms like Twitter provide the immediate broadcast ability needed to share information quickly, putting a powerful responsibility into the hands of the participatory journalist who breaks the news.

The evolution of the role social media texts play in traditional reporting of crisis events can be further illustrated through media coverage during the African protests during July 2011. Admire Mare (2013) studied how mainstream and social media converged during these social protests in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique. The author found:

> In the case of Malawi, the mainstream media trailed behind the social media in their coverage of the 20 July protests. Private and community radio stations relied on Facebook posts and Twitter feeds to disseminate early warning information. In Mozambique, the social media were responsible for breaking news, while newspapers and television stations resorted to curating information from social network sites, in order to follow up on developing stories. In Zimbabwe, the social media and mobile telephony were newsworthy for breaking the news. (2013: 89)

Again, this shows how those at the site of an event can contribute to the telling of the news story, or even break the news altogether. Those tweeting and posting updates about the protests from locations on the ground in the three African nations became foreign

correspondents for traditional news outlets globally, with an audience eager for updates during the crisis.

Traditional media's reliance on participatory journalists to get the story during this crisis is evidenced by the tweets Mare published from journalists asking their citizen counterparts for information. The interchanges between traditional news journalists and participatory journalists clearly show which parties had the story first:

> The following tweet sums up the relationship between the social and the mainstream media during the riots in Maputo: 'Hello, how can we contact you to talk about Maputo riots? Please come back to us,' Schmitt tweeted. The tweet was addressed to @JorgeBarata from freelance journalist Amandine Schmitt on behalf of the *Observers* news blog run by France 24. Similarly, Charas received a tweet from Faith Karimi, a CNN International Wire news desk editor (@FaithCNN): 'Are you in Maputo? Can you DM a phone contact I can reach you for a story?' (2013: 90)

Social media users, including Jorge Barata and Charas, were not using the same verification methods as traditional journalists, which saved them time, so these participatory journalists were actually scooping traditional media with protest updates. The traditional outlets followed afterwards, using public tweets and Facebook updates as news sources after they had verified the content. As Mare explains: "The fact that professional journalists in southern Africa took their cues from social media platforms points to the growing importance of citizens as information producers and disseminators" (2013: 95). Mare comments that journalism, as well as its audience, benefits from the addition of new players. The author found this democratisation of journalism did not necessarily erode "vital" journalistic values, such as truth-telling, fairnesss and balance, but actually led to a "new form of objectivity which foregrounds transparency, honesty

and the ethic of the everyday, while giving a voice to the voiceless" (2013: 95). Reporting during the African protests shows fast-moving news events present an opportunity for traditional and participatory journalists to work together to tell the one news story, with each using the tools they have available to report, share and verify information. The same situation was presented during the England Riots, where members of the public tweeted riot locations to *Guardian* journalist Paul Lewis – and he reported via Twitter. Later still, during the 2015 Tianjin blasts in China, Weibo users acted at participatory journalists when it came to the multitude of rumours online (Zeng, Burgess and Bruns 2019). These participatory journalists used the platform's online community to debunk, verify and fact-check rumours in a practice the authors called "self-organised fact-checking", which demonstrated "…both the robust verification practices and Chinese Internet users' civil engagement in keeping the authorities accountable" (2019: 25). In each of these examples, the participatory journalists were crowdsourcing the truth, using social media to research and check facts, which professional journalists working in tandem to verify and publish the content.

The ability of participatory journalists to access technological tools to help tell a news story as it unfolds, however fast, does not replace professional journalistic practice. The online activity surrounding the 2009 Iranian elections was hailed as evidence that technology, namely the social media platform Twitter, had become a vital ingredient in the traditional newsroom. Megan Knight's 2012 study into the sources UK journalists used when reporting on the Iranian elections instead showed that, although the event was touted as a "Twitter revolution", journalists still rely on traditional methods, such as

telephone calls and existing contacts, to research their stories. She says:

> …although the mythology of the Internet as a place where all voices are equal, and have equal access to the public discourse continues – a kind of idealized 'public sphere' – the sourcing practices of journalists and the traditions of coverage continue to ensure that traditional voices and sources are heard above the crowd. (2012: 61)

In other words, Knight (2012) found journalists considered the internet to be a useful tool, but it did not replace the traditional sourcing and contact methods, such as interviews with eyewitnesses or trusted sources, that they had used before such technology was available. Lia-Paschalia Spyridou et al's (2013) study into Greek journalists' attitudes towards using technology in their jobs confirmed what Knight (2012) found. The latter study showed Greek journalists' resistance to wholly embracing technology, with the media professionals preferring instead to rely on more traditional methods, such as the telephone and news agencies. The authors found: "…internet and related tools are seen as empowering journalists to do their (traditional) jobs better rather than moving on to the next stage built around a stronger commitment to capitalize on the growing sociotechnical potential" (2013: 93). Although news journalists may not have completely embraced technology as their favoured workplace tool, their readers look at digital advances in a different light. This research project shows an evolution in attitudes towards technology for both professional and participatory journalists, with each seeing the benefits of using technological tools to capture crisis events. However, professional journalists still fall back on their tried-and-tested practices when sourcing and confirming news leads.

The downside of participatory journalism

Arguments against audience participation in news production, such as lack of training, not using the same tests for accuracy and having little understanding of the implications of what they are sharing online, speak to the guidelines media outlets have put in place around the use of contributed material. This thesis shows how *The Guardian*'s journalists use social media texts to report on three crisis events, highlighting the many factors at play when participatory journalists are contributing to reporting on events. Simon Waldman studied amateur reporting of the Indian Ocean earthquake and found citizen reporting from this extreme disaster highlighted both the strengths and weaknesses of citizen journalism. The former was in the "vividness of first-person accounts and the sheer volume of them", with the number of accounts leading to the latter that exposed "the lack of shape, structure and overall meaning to all that was available" (2005). Summing up the response, Waldman says "[t]here is a fundamental difference between reading hundreds of people's stories and understanding the 'real' story" (2005). Participatory journalists were feeding content to news organisations around the world after the earthquake, which shows the value of having someone report from the scene of an unfolding crisis. However this event also highlights that these same people were unable to interpret what they were sharing for their audience in the same way a traditional journalist would.

The roles of reporter and reader may have become blurred in participatory journalism, but the traditional journalists' responsibility in telling a news story binds them to follow

stricter rules regarding what they can publish. After studying how BBC newsrooms collaborated with their audiences Williams, Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen found: "Audience material is often described by commentators and practitioners as having revolutionised journalism by disrupting the traditional relationships between producers and consumers of the news" (2011: 85). The access to content that has already been created has presented an opportunity for journalists who are now able to tell their stories from a wider viewpoint, however the authors comment that each party still retains its initial role, despite the crossover. Williams, Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen say, "[o]verwhelmingly, journalists have remained journalists and audiences are still audiences, and truly collaborative relations between the two groups remain rare exceptions" (2011: 96). Expanding further on the individual roles of professional and amateur reporter, Williams, Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen use the BBC's move towards utilising user-generated content (UGC) to illustrate that even though journalism tools and practice has changed, so much is still the same. The authors explain further:

> …the dominant way of understanding audience material amongst BBC journalists involves seeing it as little more than another news source. Audience Content is viewed by most journalists working at the UGC Hub as material to be processed, rather than as an opportunity for the public to retain creative control over their output, or a chance for journalists to truly collaborate with the public. (2011: 89)

Such raw contributed material is considered to be merely the "grist to the journalistic mill" (2011: 95) that Williams, Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen found is processed to "fit within existing long-established processes of journalistic production" (2011: 94). Essentially, they say, such material is an additional news source. Looking at the BBC example presented by Williams, Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen (2011), it is clear that

traditional news journalists still hold on to overall control when it comes to reporting the news, rather than handing the creative reins over to the audience.

Similarly, Hermida and Neil Thurman (2008) and Lily Canter's (2013) studies of UK newspaper websites' use of UGC conclude that material produced by participatory journalists is still most useful when used in conjunction with work produced by professionally-trained journalists. Hermida and Thurman's interview with UK newspaper editors found user-generated content provided both source material and additional material, but it was still integrated within existing journalistic practice (2008: 350). Contributed content needs polishing and added context, which is provided by traditional journalists. In Hermida and Thurman's words: "…the value in user participation becomes not just the content itself, but how it is sifted, organised and presented by professional journalists" (2008: 354). Canter (2013) investigated the role participatory journalists played in community newspapers using the *Leicester Mercury* as a case study. She interviewed the newspaper's journalists, participatory journalists and readers and observed journalistic practice to assess how successful the *Mercury*'s collaborative model is. Canter found, "[u]tilizing the supply of material provided for free by the public has become a vital process in the production of local news for both civic and economic designs", however this material enhances work produced by traditional journalists rather than replaces it (2013: 1092). The author continues by saying, "[c]itizen journalists have a variety of roles to play but their strength lies in cooperation with professional news organizations which are able to moderate their content and create boundaries between different types of reporting" (2013: 1106). Hermida and Thurman (2008), Williams,

Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen (2011) and Canter (2013) all found traditional journalists are willing to accept newsworthy material that can add to their own news stories, but they draw the line at handing over their bylines to readers to tell the stories completely.

This evolution in journalistic practice is not a battle between 'us and them', with news journalists playing the 'us' role and the audience as 'them'. Rather, the combination of traditional and participatory journalism provides the opportunity for news to be told in a more rounded way because professional practice and the information collected by members of the public from 'on the ground' are combined to share the whole picture. Indeed, John Pavlik cites a 2011 study of both traditional and participatory photojournalists involved in documenting breaking news that found, "…although there were differences in the type of photos taken by professional journalists versus citizen journalists (non-paid, non-trained), the actual newsworthiness of the photos was about the same" (2013: 2). Driven by technology, this evolution in journalism sees participatory journalists utilising the means available to them to tell the story of an event from the scene. It is this meeting of professional and amateur journalistic practice that this thesis examines, where the information broadcast by participatory journalists from newsworthy events, such as crises, is then published by traditional media.

What counts as news?

The way in which news is created and consumed brings up an additional argument about who decides the value of that information. Newsworthiness and how a topic comes to be

deemed newsworthy to a journalist were discussed above in the introductory chapter and earlier in this chapter in relation to gatekeeping theory. When discussing how journalists bear witness during crisis events, Allan says: "Most journalists have been formally trained to be dispassionately impartial when documenting what they see and hear under such circumstances, recognizing as they do that the truth-value of their chosen rendering of facts will be at stake" (2013: 1). What a journalist considers news may, or may not, be considered news to a reader, although it should be assumed that the journalist has considered his or her audience when making that decision about a story's newsworthiness. Instead, the idea of what can be deemed newsworthy introduces the question of what the wider community considers to be news and, following on from that point, how that view shapes what that community shares as news on social media. In Angela Romano and Cratis Hippocrates' words, "[p]ublic journalism acknowledges that, although many news organisations have catchy slogans along the lines of 'news you can use', most news has little direct relevance to Mr or Mrs Average" (2001: 166). Romano and Hippocrates frame public journalism as central to the existence of democracy:

> Public journalism differs from the standard approach to news in three major ways. First, it works to allow the public to drive the agenda of what is reported in the news, rather than to allow the 'big boys' of business, bureaucracy, and politics unlimited control of the wheel. Second, it attempts to include the public in a discussion rather than merely throw information at the audience as it comes to hand. Third, it aims to help the public in making decisions about significant community issues, and conveys those decisions to policymakers, the captains of industry and commerce, and society at large. (2001: 169-70)

This position reflects the broader argument in journalism studies: that public involvement in the production of news increases the relevance of that news to that audience. If public journalism is the means by which news is made more relevant to the average reader, the

method utilised to share this news must be accessible and easy to use so those who have the ability to tell the news story can also share it. Technology is the key to bridging this gap between journalism and those who are telling the news story, whether they be traditional news journalists or participatory journalists.

Social media and blogs enable the interaction and two-way flow of information that needs to occur between news journalists and their readers to tell a participatory news story. In this way, technology can be both a blessing and a curse for today's news journalists; indeed Deuze considers journalism, as an industry, has become more hybrid, diverse and messy through the addition of technology (2019: 2). Tapsall says, "[i]t [the technology] presents potentially a tremendous tool for the foreign correspondent or roving reporters of the twenty-first century. Alternatively, it provides the means to turn any person in any location into a remote-controlled walking content generator" (2001: 251-2). The next section discusses how technology, namely social media, has opened up opportunities for participatory journalists to become involved in telling the news.

In discussing what is and what is not news, it is worth bringing fake news, as discussed in the introductory chapter, back into this project at this point. Indeed, the term has reached such legitimacy that Collins Dictionary named it the 'Word of the year' in 2017 (Collins Dictionary 2017), using the definition: "false, often sensational, information disseminated under the guise of news reporting". In defining the term "fake news" for an academic audience Axel Gelfert describes it as a "species of disinformation", in that both fake news and disinformation are misleading (2018: 103).

He explains fake news can be "fabricated from thin air", but, more importantly, it is "built explicitly around falsehoods" (2018: 104). While Gelfert agrees "fake news" is not a new phenomenon, he points out that the 'alternate facts presented', coupled with social media as the method of distributing those facts, "…forms a potent—and, as the events of 2016 show, politically explosive—mix" (2018: 113). Tom Chatfield writes that fake news can be created by anyone as long as the 'facts' being presented have "emotive impact" to both the news bearer and his or her audience (2017: 29). If these "alternative facts" are shared with enough aggression and vigour in an environment when claims are not often tested, such as social media, they can become accepted fact quickly. Chatfield explains further:

> New stories – fake or otherwise – exist in constant, ferocious competition for belief and engagement. In our age of information suffusion, their supply is plentiful while the attention upon which they thrive is scarce … It doesn't take skill to send a lie skipping around the world: just the shameless repetition of whatever some people want to believe using whatever means have already proved themselves affective. (2017: 29-30)

This argument gives rise to the idea of social media as an "echo chamber", with the public trusting their friends and amateurs sharing insights online, rather than looking to those with expertise on the topic (Nguyen and Vu 2019). Further on this idea, Aljosha Shapals interviewed journalists about fake news and found their major concern was the spread of such information online (2018: 980). Journalists' responses could be divided into five main concerns, Shapals found:

> …first, the need for journalists to adapt rigorous and robust fact-checking techniques in the post-factual era; second, concerns over a potentially decreased "watchdog" role of journalism; third, the dangers posted to journalistic objectivity; fourth, the speed by which fake news spreads online; and finally, concerns over a potential long-term decrease of public trust in the media. (2018: 980)

Despite the strong connection to the themes of verification, objectivity, speed and trusts covered within this research project, this thesis is not a study of fake news, or even how that news is spread. However, the topic must be included here as a reference point because social media is the frequent tool used to distribute fake news. There are instances during crisis events where rumours have been spread via social media – including the three events studied for this thesis, which are considered as part of the discussion chapter – however the topic of fake news is one small part of the study into the evolution of journalism. Despite it making up a small part, any discussion of social media and news reporting post the 2016 US election should acknowledge the relevance of fake news in the ongoing news distribution debate.

How social media shapes news

Social media has lessened the distance between a news journalists' ability to tell a story and an untrained member of the public to share their experience of the same event. Both versions can be considered newsworthy. The wide availability, and the ease in use, of handheld mobile devices that take photos and record video or audio to share material with an online audience through such platforms as Twitter, Facebook or Instagram has changed the way news is received and consumed. Cook and Dickinson (2014) say social media became the medium where people could keep informed during the England Riots. The social media texts produced became stories in themselves:

> The London riots in 2011, sparked by the fatal shooting of 29-year-old Mark Duggan by the police, were a seminal moment for Twitter – and the need for mainstream media to understand the ways in which social media could become the story. As legacy news

> providers often struggled to keep up with the unpredictable, dynamic story on the ground, the social networking site became the go-to place to track events. (2014: 209)

Eddo-Lodge (2011) shows how platform accessibility came into play when writing about the technology used during the riots: "Twitter, by and large, is a public affair, while BBM is private and only accessible to people with BlackBerry mobiles. This is a social network that has an increased privacy by default and a level of anonymity that doesn't come with Twitter". By comparison, a Twitter user's tweets are only private if shared through a direct message (DM), otherwise their tweets can be read by their entire network. This audience can be multiplied even further if the original tweet is retweeted. Weller et al explain how this process works:

> What such 'simple' retweets do is to move a message from the specific, meso-layer personal public of the originating user, constituted by that user's Twitter followers, to the meso-layer personal public of the retweeter, thereby reaching a new and almost certainly different group of followers. (2014: 22)

During the riots, the context of content published by Twitter users collapsed as multiple audiences were flattened into one mass, and tweets were spread further than the original intended audience when retweeted. Marwick and boyd (2010) explain how this happens, saying "[s]ocial media thus combines elements of broadcast media and face-to-face communication" (2010: 123). Further, these authors extend the concept of a networked audience by explaining, "…viewers are connected not only to the user, but to each other, creating an active, communicative network…" (2010: 129). The process of retweeting and broadcasting the tweet to a much greater audience makes Twitter a highly effective platform to disseminate breaking news, like a crisis event.

Cardiff University researchers Nasser Alsaedi, Pete Burnap and Omer Rana used data collected from Twitter during the England riots to show how computer systems can detect – or even predict – crimes on the platform. Burnap explains that Twitter data was used to better understand social deviance in the riots case. He said: "In this research we show that online social media are becoming the go-to place to report observations of everyday occurrences – including social disorder and terrestrial criminal activity" (cited in England 2017). Similarly, data collected from the Dark Web, which exists "underneath the surface of the internet" (Chertoff 2017:1) has also been used to monitor criminal activity (Portnoff 2018). The Dark Web is a "…generally anonymous [space], which makes it a sanctuary for cybercriminals and political dissidents alike…" (Chertoff 2017:1), making it a desirable place for illegal online activity, including the buying and selling of illicit goods and forums to exchange ideas. Portnoff (2018) studied criminal activity on the internet and dark web, namely classified ads selling trafficked humans for sexual services, black-market forums, and sites hosting forums on child sexual abuse material. She found the "internet facilitates interactions among human beings all over the world" (2018: 1) but explains that "[a]s technology evolves, abuse and cybercrime evolve with it" (2018: 3). Portnoff's study spoke about how "security practitioners routinely monitor [dark web] forums to stay current of the latest developments in the underground" (2018: 3). Like crime detection on the Dark Web, but without the anonymity, Twitter data can also to point to, and detect criminal, activity. What happens once criminal activity is detected on social media is explored further through the research presented during the *Guardian* case studies, with implications of those findings queried.

Social media has shaped news in such a way that it has become a vital part of the media industry. Johnston argues that social media contributes to changing patterns in media reporting and audience participation:

> The media landscape has undoubtedly become more collaborative and interactive, and audience participation at all levels is now a consideration for journalists who harvest content from websites, tweet the audience directly and encourage contributions to their programs. (2016)

Vivian Roese considers that "social media rather function as the meeting place where the audience is to be found by news media. They are platforms where the audience exchange news and show each other the latest pieces of information they are willing to share and recommend" (Roese 2018: 314). Similarly, Richard Fletcher and Rasmus Nielsen say social media is so relevant to news production that it should be considered an imperative part of the news selection process, along with search engines and aggregators (2018: 1468). Bruno calls this the "Twitter effect", with this impact illustrated perfectly through crisis events in the way people communicate and how media outlets cover them. He says "…the *Twitter effect* allows you to provide live coverage without any reporters on the ground, by simply newsgathering user-generated content available online" (Bruno 2011:8). Putting forward an alternative argument, Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis (2003) call this phenomenon "we media". They warn that the profession of journalism is not only at threat from new technology and competitors, but also from its audience. As the authors explain: "Armed with easy-to-use Web publishing tools, always-on connections and increasingly powerful mobile devices, the online audience has the means to become an active participant in the creation and dissemination of news and information" (2003: 7). A decade later, Hermida (2014) points to the greater diversity

additional online reporting platforms offer. He says, "[t]he open nature of social media technologies could, in theory, foster greater pluralism in media discourse by providing channels for a greater number and diversity of news sources" (2014: 480). Technology has changed the way members of the public experience an event they consider to be newsworthy; with many now choosing to share their commentary, photos and video online.

Social media, blogs and other online publications publish what was once the domain of traditional journalists. In her research on how media website viewers have become secondary gatekeepers for the content published on the sites, Jane Singer (2014) warns that being able to access more information online about an event does not necessarily translate to better news coverage of that event. She says, "[i]n the open and unbounded online environment, where a limitless volume of information is available, the distinction between quality and quantity is especially important" (2014: 56). These rules around that distinction change when information from media professionals is hard to come by, such as during a fast moving and evolving breaking news event. It is during such an event, like a crisis, that the combination of social media and an eager participatory journalist prove their value in reporting the news. As evidenced in Bainbridge, Beasley and Tynan's research (2011), the examples of Mumbai terrorist attacks, Iranian elections and the US Airways plane crash show how quickly news can be broadcast by members of the public using Twitter. The authors found, "[i]t is in the hands of the citizen journalist, then, that Twitter becomes a way of communicating what it's like to be immersed in the immediacy of an event" (2011: 365). News is no longer published by a few, but via anyone who has

access to a recording device and the means to broadcast that recorded material.

Journalists using social media

Social media as a reporting tool has already been discussed in relation to members of the public using the online platforms to publish information, however it has also become a tool for traditional journalists as well, as pointed out by Rusbridger (2010) earlier. John Parmelee (2013) writes that Twitter is the preferred social media platform for journalists, who use it for research, but also "as a tool for self-promotion and branding" (2013: 249). Monika Djerf-Pierre, Marina Ghersetti and Ukrike Hedman studied journalists' changing attitudes towards journalism and found social media was used on a daily basis by a "great majority" of Swedish journalists which, they suggested, indicated "the ultimate normalization of social media in journalism" (2016: 859). One of the ways journalists use social media platforms daily is to monitor them for relevant information. This practice is called 'social listening', which, in Adornato's words, "is a way to uncover potential story ideas, content, and source as well as monitor conversations in real time about a current story" (2018: 81). Hermida's (2012) study on collaborative verification in journalism found traditional journalists see social media as another broadcast medium. He says, "[t]he ability to send short bursts of information in real-time has been taken up by journalists as a way to post snippets of news and to share and send links to their material" (2012: 663). Using social media to publish news items becomes a more prominent reporting tool during crises.

The plane crashing on the Hudson River is an example of an amateur reporter breaking a story via Twitter, but social media is also used as a publishing platform for crisis reporting. Professional journalists tweeted breaking news reports on a damaging tornado (Sonderman 2012) and the England Riots (Allan 2013) in 2011 and the Aurora Theater shooting in 2012 (Anon 2013). The *Tuscaloosa News* published breaking news reports via Twitter after a tornado hit the region in 2011 (Sonderman 2012) and *Denver Post* reporters used the same platform to break news of the Aurora Theater shooting on July 20, 2012, to followers (Anon 2013). The *Post*'s Twitter account was also used throughout the four days following the shooting to update followers on news, share comments from witnesses and photos from the scene and ask sources to contact the newsroom. Similarly, *News* reporter Jamon Smith tweeted from his Tuscaloosa home in the aftermath of a tornado. He says: "I'm watching firemen try to dig a girl out of the rubble of my apartments right now" (Sonderman 2012). *News* city editor Katherine Lee was quoted as saying, "[t]he first indications anybody was getting of how widespread this devastation was, was through [our reporters'] tweets" (Sonderman 2012). The Pulitzer.org article (Anon 2013) about the Aurora Theater shootings found, "Over the course of the first four days of the shooting, *The Post* and its reporters posted more than a thousand entries on Twitter and Facebook". Allan (2013) quoted *Guardian* photojournalist Paul Lewis explaining documenting the England Riots was, "facilitated by social networking" (2013: 140). Lewis (in Allan 2013) says "[t]he first portal for communicating what we saw was Twitter. It enabled us to deliver real-time reports from the scene, but more importantly enabled other users of Twitter to provide constant feedback and directions to trouble spots". Allan's study explains further how journalists used Twitter. In Lewis' words:

"While journalists covering previous riots would chase ambulances to find the frontline, we followed what people on social media told us" (2013). Later research by Belair-Gagnon (2017) showed journalists also use private chat apps, such as WeChat and WhatsApp, to cover crises, particularly political unrest. These examples of crisis event coverage show social media, and other digital platforms, play an important part in storytelling, particularly when used by traditional journalists who are able to add context to their online reporting.

While Jeff Sonderman (2012) and Allan (2013) found that social media was a vital tool for traditional journalists reporting on crisis events, Nielsen and Kim Schroder (2014) questioned the importance of social media as a way of accessing, finding, and engaging with news. The authors studied media in eight countries (UK, US, Germany, Japan, France, Italy, Spain and Denmark) and found television was still the most widely used source of news, with newspapers considered more important than social media for the above. Nielsen and Schroder explain:

> Overall, social media, despite growing use more generally, continue to play a relatively limited role as sources of news, even for the younger generations, but are seen as one amongst several important gateways to finding news online, especially by younger generations. While social media are clearly increasingly integral to the social life of many, our analysis shows that it is still only a minority, even of the younger generation, that regularly use these widely disseminated tools to participate in sharing, commenting on, or producing news. (2014: 2)

Although this research covers how important social media are as sources of news relative to other media, and the extent to which people use these platforms to find and participate in news, it presents another side to the argument about how involved the audience is in

news production. The authors found only a minority of social media users engage in more participatory activities like sharing, commenting on, or publishing their own stories, but they were still contributing to the news content. A similar study repeated now might reflect different results when it came to public participation in news, but it does point to an active news-minded minority which is also reflected in the research compiled for this thesis.

The eyewitness factor

Traditional journalists reporting from the scene of an event use their role as an 'eyewitness', adding their own impressions about what is happening around them, to add credibility to their news reports. If a professional journalist is not able to get to the scene, members of the public who witnessed the event add that credibility. John Peters (2001), Allan (2013), Cottle (2014) and Zelizer (2007) have extensively researched the importance of witnessing at mediated events, and the associated issues around the truth and authenticity of what is being witnessed. As Peters explains, "[Witnessing] raises questions of truth and experience, presence and absence, death and pain, seeing and saying, and the trustworthiness of perception – in short, fundamental questions of communication" (2001: 707). Being at the scene to bear witness to the events within an unfolding story adds a level of truth to a journalist's words. Objectivity is assumed when journalists use source material, either by adding their own insights from the scene, quoting an eyewitness or by co-opting that witness's own material. As Gaye Tuchman explains, "…the newsmen must question facts by going to the source…" (1972: 664) and,

"[t]he newsmen view quotations of other people's opinions as a form of supporting evidence" (1972: 668). The quotation marks and attribution Tuchman mentions are used to indicate the journalist is not making the claim, but the quote is the words of the eyewitness source. While an eyewitness account is their version of the truth, which could be disputed by other witnesses or evidence encountered later, a witness account adds weight to the news story because they were there at the scene.

The eyewitness argument and its importance in journalistic reporting of crisis events has been developed further by Peters (2001) and Allan (2013). Peters studies the relevance of sourcing witnesses from the scene of a crisis which, arguably, is a vital addition to news story about the event because of its fast-moving and confusing nature. He says "'Being there' matters since it avoids the ontological depreciation of being a copy. The copy, like hearsay, is indefinitely repeatable; the event is singular, and its witnesses are forever irreplaceable in their privileged relation to it" (2001: 718). Allan writes similarly about witnessing, saying it is, "the lynchpin of good reporting" (2013: 11). He explains (2013: 9-10): "The intrinsic value of 'being there', on the ground, has been prized since the earliest days of crisis journalism". The concept of bearing witness is crucial when reporting on an event, however it is no longer tied so intrinsically to professional journalistic practice. Instead, technology, in the form of mobile devices and social media, enables anyone to report from the scene of an event, therefore enabling those who witnessed and recorded the event to take the position as 'journalist' and tell their story.

Allan (2013) uses the example of Abbottabad café manager Sohaib Athar live-tweeting

the capture and killing of Osama Bin Laden 250m away from where he lived as evidence of people's desire to share news and connect with others. He says, "[l]ittle did Athar know at the time that his efforts to offer a first-hand description of what he aptly termed in one tweet a 'complicated situation' would reverberate around the planet in the hours to come" (2013: 2). Hours later Athar tweeted, "[u]h oh, now I'm the guy who live-blogged the Osama raid without knowing it," and was contacted for interviews by journalists from around the world (2013:3). Suddenly this "accidental journalist" (2013:1) had become an expert on Bin Laden's capture and his Twitter followers jumped from 750 to 86,000 in 24 hours (2013: 5) as a worldwide audience was hungry to find out more about the capture. This story of the humble café manager breaking an internationally significant news story illustrates that anyone can report news, but that not everyone has the skills to interpret what they are reporting on.

The idea of people witnessing and telling their own version of an event is not novel, however the use of social media to share their impression of what happened puts the story in front of many quickly. Many technological advances, such as the printing press, public postal services, transnational telegraphic cabling and radio transmissions, all stemmed from society's need to communicate. Allan points out that Abraham Zapruder's recording of US President John F. Kennedy's 1963 assassination in Dallas, Texas, is considered one of the first examples of amateur news reporting (2013: 68). Members of the public who lined the roadside hoping to capture a photo of their president inadvertently became witnesses and reporters in the aftermath of the shooting. Allan says, "Despite there being about fifty journalists in the motorcade…the most detailed eyewitness testimony, as well

as the most revealing photographic documentation, was provided by ordinary bystanders…" (2013: 72). Additionally, Gonzalez (2012) wrote about how plumber George Holliday filmed Rodney King being beaten by police from his apartment in 1991. Gonzalez says, "the film [Holliday] made changed forever how news is collected and disseminated in our modern world" (2012). Before social media was available to document an event, there was television, print, radio, photography, video and telephones, and before that cave paintings, symbols carved into stone tablets and, the most original communication method, word of mouth. In his study of media coverage of global disasters, Cottle (2014) argues that the way disasters are communicated by the media has intensified through technology via factors like scale, saturation and surveillance. Twitter has been identified as a significant communication and networking tool during events like the Arab Spring (Hermida, Lewis and Zamith 2014) and the England Riots (Lewis et al 2011) and, as Bruno (2011) points out, in the 24 hours after the Haiti earthquake news media relied on social media updates. Cottle explains, "[h]istorically communication technologies have invariably been used to convey disaster events and their impacts across space and time. The involvement of media communications in disasters can hardly therefore be said to be new" (2014: 5). More recently, footage taken by citizens of George Floyd's murder prompted Black Lives Matter protests around the world and, subsequently, led to the arrests of the four Minneapolis police officers charged with George Floyd's murder (Robinson-Jacobs 2020: 1) while, conversely, a lack of similar footage and the sole witness changing his story meant the officers who shot Breonna Taylor were not charged with killing her (Melendez 2020: 1). Bearing witness is not a new concept, but like the technological changes that have opened up journalism to alternate participants in generations past, social media opened up eyewitnessing opportunities to the masses at speed.

Eyewitnessing is a critical element in news journalism, with many media organisations using the term to establish their reputations as news providers. Anyone can be an eyewitness to an event, but journalists are trained to skillfully convey the meaning and context of that event to an audience. Zelizer researched the use of the word "eyewitnessing" throughout history and as a word used frequently in journalistic practice (2007: 408). She found media organisations used "eyewitnessing" to convey credibility: "Ever since journalists were first expected to provide an account of events beyond the experience of ordinary citizens, they have relied on eyewitnessing to underscore, establish, and maintain their authority for reporting". The ability to be an eyewitness is tied into journalistic practice, and eyewitness reporting had a stamp of authority because the reporter was there. Zelizer also found that journalists started using the word "eyewitnessing" to make their content more appealing to audiences (2007), however the definition has changed over time to extend beyond journalism to now include the public providing source material for the media to use in its reporting of an event. She says, "[t]he combination of technology and nonconventional journalists has become the most strategically useful way to accomplish eyewitnessing, even when it has chipped away at journalism's own centrality" (2007: 425). In other words, being at the scene of an event to bear witness is more important than who the eyewitness is. The line between professional and amateur becomes blurred when the witness shares that experience in a news context.

A crisis event presents the ideal opportunity to bridge the professional gap between

traditional and participatory journalists, with news organisations relying on contributed material to assert their witnessing ability, particularly if there are no journalists to report from the scene. As Kari Anden-Papadopoulos (2013) found, critical events rewrite the rules around witnessing for media outlets wanting to tell the new story. The author says, "[t]raditional journalists no longer have a monopoly on footage from zones of conflict and crises around the world" (2013: 343). Building on the idea that anyone can witness events and share texts on what they see, Anden-Papadopoulos explains: "Citizen eyewitness recordings from zones of conflict and crisis are increasingly employed to help establish journalism's authority as witness to the truth of the event, especially in controversial circumstances" (2013: 341). As already discussed in the section above, the richness of crisis events make eyewitnessed media texts an essential tool in reporting on that event. Often these texts come from members of the public who record it for personal sharing amongst their own contacts, but the material is picked up by news media eager to show news from the scene.

Anden-Papdopoulos and Pantti (2013) researched traditional media attitudes towards citizen witnessing by interviewing professional journalists at major Finnish and Swedish news organisations. The authors explain how the practices of traditional and participatory journalism converge when it comes to bearing witness: "This witnessing is conveyed by the on-site presence (eyewitnessing) and professional skill of storytelling, which weaves images, narrative, and different voices together" (2013: 963). Technology has enabled people on the scene to move from a passive observer to become an active participant in the unfolding event through sharing what they see as it is happening. Drawing on the

journalists' responses, Anden-Papdopoulos and Pantti found, "…the nature of journalistic witnessing is changing as its central source, the eyewitness video footage and photographs, is increasingly coming from citizens (or victims, or activists) already present at the crisis zone" (2013: 964). Without necessarily meaning to report on the scene in front of them, the members of the public who are bearing witness and sharing media texts become participatory journalists through those reports.

Extending the concept of unintentional witnessing, Allan et al (2007) coined the term "accidental journalist" to describe how tourists holidaying in Indonesia when the Indian Ocean tsunami swept through their beachfront resorts felt compelled to capture the scene of devastation (2007: 378; Charles and Allan 2019). They took photographs and video footage of the devastation for friends and relatives, but these texts were then used by news organisations to add to their coverage (2007: 376). Allan et al explain how these contributed texts humanised what had happened in Aceh province, but also signalled a change in the way crisis events were reported from then on:

> From today's perspective, the ways in which ordinary members of the public—'accidental journalists' in the view of some—engaged in impromptu newsgathering can be interpreted as signifying a tipping-point for online news, not least by opening up for redefinition what counts as 'news' and who can be a 'journalist' in ways which continue to reverberate today. (2007: 378)

As already discussed earlier in this chapter, the lines between news producers and news consumers has blurred. This breaking down of boundaries can be seen in the early examples outlined above – Indian Ocean tsunami, Hudson River plane crash, Bin Laden's capture and the Arab Spring – however the power in crisis reporting still resides through

the way traditional journalists co-opt this amateur material and present it as news because they present more than one person's experience. Williams, Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen explain how the co-opting scenario works, showing that such material is framed as news through "ensuring accuracy, authenticity, and impartiality are of paramount importance to the journalists when dealing with audience material (2011: 93-94). When news of a crisis event breaks those wanting to find out more place their trust in information reported from the scene, whether it comes from a traditional or a participatory journalist. As Bennett (2013) explains in his analysis of the effect of amateur involvement in the BBC's reporting, public involvement in the news making process has become commonplace: "The demand for sifting, organising, aggregating and curating material has grown. The significant staff resources that the BBC dedicates to these tasks is an acknowledgement that UGC is 'here to stay as a major component of news coverage'". The rise in mass self-communication or witnessing during crisis events has forced traditional media outlets to adapt to new methods of crisis reporting namely, how to incorporate social media texts into such news reports.

In his research on the media's relationship with citizen-contributed images Pantti (2013) found the use of contributed material is becoming more significant. He says, "[h]he perceived value of citizen images lies first and foremost in their newsworthiness which is intrinsically related to their immediacy. Amateur photographers 'are there' to provide evidence of what happened" (2013: 211). Foreshadowing the importance of eyewitness material, Pantti explains: "…citizen images are not only shaping news content, but also what is considered 'newsworthy' which events become news and which are overlooked

by the news media" (2013: 203). Such contributed texts have now become an integral part of crisis reporting, with new relationships and reliance between traditional and participatory journalists developing as a result.

Speed as a factor in crisis reporting

The online environment provides a place where information can be published instantly, with speed both a blessing and a curse when it comes to reporting the story and verifying audience submitted material. Hermida (2012) found that the speed of online posts presents problems for journalists looking for the truth. He says "[n]ews organizations and journalists are negotiating the tensions between verification and publication, given the emergence of social media as channels for breaking news, and the speed at which information is disseminated on the network" (2012: 663). It is within the constantly changing online environment – which is flooded with information and new ways to share that information – that traditional fact-checking techniques must change in order to keep up. In his work about verifying online content, Bruno says:

> In this fast-moving scenario, news media outlets not only need to adopt an open-minded approach to social media, but they also must update their standards and techniques for authenticating information. Because of this, technology will play a more vital role, helping reporters more effectively to validate user-generated content and other online sources. (2011: 69)

It is not only the storytelling tools used in traditional journalism that are evolving to keep up with changing technology and audiences, but also the means by which source material is verified. The tools professional journalists use to establish text veracity are explored in

depth in the discussion chapter.

Speed is also a factor when it comes to journalists correcting mistakes in news stories that are unfolding online in real time. Singer (2011) outlines the varying degrees to which media outlets make corrections as the story develops, and how they inform readers about that process. For example, minor errors, such as spelling mistakes, are simply corrected without notification, whereas larger errors may be struck through or updated with an edit or correction notification posted at the beginning or end of the article. Singer says:

> Questions arise about how and when to signal to your audience, first, that you got something wrong, and second, that you have fixed it…Of course, there is no guarantee that the update will be seen by the person who read it the first time – likely not, in fact, because why would I click on a story that I think I have already read? In the meantime, the speed with which the first story may have been spread around the world is, as with everything published online, quite breathtaking. (2011: 6)

This practice gives the audience insight into the developing nature of the story, and builds trust around the journalistic process because the corrections are explained. Writing about the tension between accuracy and speed and its relevance in a breaking story, Karlsson (2011) points out that the audience's need to know what is happening immediately is more important than that information being completely correct. He says, "…users' appreciation of immediacy indicates that they are willing to trade accuracy for speed…" (2011: 291). While the speed at which information is shared online can pose a dilemma for journalists because of the messy nature of editing on the run, so to speak, it does not seem to create the same issue for the audience, which Karlsson argues, prefers the messy developing version of the news sooner, rather wait for the completely polished story.

An additional factor at play, when speed is a concern, is the unveiling of the traditional journalistic reporting process. If the audience can see the story unfolding in front of their eyes the steps involved in the journalistic storytelling process are more transparent. Karlsson explains the idea of sharing the process further:

> The high speed of online news enables the website audience to literally *see* in real time…segments of the gathering and processing stages of news work. The nature of high-speed online news has caused previously concealed journalistic processes to become visible to the audience, therefore immediacy has, albeit perhaps unwittingly, become a catalyst to an openness in communication that plays a pivotal role in transparency. (2011: 289)

As a result, traditional news journalism has become a more open process with greater audience involvement, but it is also a process that can come under fire at every step. This divide between needing to know what is happening as soon as possible, and being able to access the full and factually correct version is a chasm journalists straddle when covering crisis events.

Verification in the digital age

Verifying information sourced through research has always been an imperative step within journalistic practice. Not only does verifying the facts ensure the journalist is reporting accurately, but at the very extreme end of the equation it can also mean the difference between legal action, impacting reptation, putting someone in danger, or even saving their life. Indeed, Nee argues that verification skills need to be taught more widely now as "the degree to which messaging apps are being used to spread and discuss news

stories privately could be threatening to democracy" (2019: 180). Hermida (2012) considers that social media has the potential to threaten journalistic accuracy for a similar reason. In explaining how Twitter has influenced verification of online texts, Hermida says:

> Through the discipline of verification, journalists determine the truth, accuracy, or validity of news events, establishing jurisdiction over the ability to objectively parse reality to claim a special kind of authority and status. Social media question the individualistic, top-down ideology of traditional journalism, subverting journalism's claim to a monopoly on the provision of everyday public knowledge. (2012: 659)

Both Hermida (2012) and Steve Buttry (2013) argue that verification is at the heart of journalistic practice. Hermida believes, "[t]he notion of the journalist as the verifier of news and information is at the core of journalism as a system of knowledge production and central to a structural claim to expert status and statement of authority" (2012: 661). Similarly, Buttry explains that, "[v]erification is the essence of journalism, but it also illustrates the difficulty of journalism and the need for high standards: The path to verification can vary with each fact" (2013: 15). Despite the influx of contributed information via social media, the journalistic value of verification is as important now as it has ever been in accurately reporting the news.

Digital technology has proven to be both an advantage and a danger for journalists looking to verify online material before publishing. Buttry believes the never-ending news cycle has made fact checking even more vital:

> The 24/7 news cycle and rise of social media and user-generated content require us to gather and report as events unfold, making swift decisions about whether information has been sufficiently verified; digital tools give us new ways to find and reach sources;

> databases and ubiquitous cellphones with cameras give us massive amounts of documentation to seek and assess. Successful verification results from effective use of technology, as well as from commitment to timeless standards of accuracy. (2013: 16)

Buttry's argument combines a traditional journalist's inherent fact-checking skills with the new tools technology has opened up to carry out this essential process. This project aims to show that in the same way technology has added to the means of verifying information, social media has added to the number of sources made available to tell the story and the speed at which such information can be shared.

Studies that research how social media texts are verified (Posetti 2011; Bebawi 2013; Wardle 2013) introduce questions around the quality of the resulting journalistic product with regard to accuracy and ethics. Social media has changed culture in such a way that users photograph what they are wearing, eating and doing on a daily basis, and then share these images via their preferred platforms to be seen and commented on by their networks. Documenting what is happening in daily lives is so commonplace, that eyewitnesses who photograph or film an event do not necessarily consider it will be used in a news report; more than likely they are recording to share the event with friends. Media interest in their text would then be seen as an added bonus because it would share the content to a wider audience. Nee's (2019) research on how teenagers and young adults verify news shows how media consumption habits have changed: social cues are used as additional tools to verify and rank information online. She explains:

> Focus group participants made judgments about the credibility of a post and decided whether to read it based on comments other users made and the person who posted or shared the content. If users' political opinions were similar to the poster, they were more likely to find the post believable. (Nee 2019: 180)

Saba Bebawi's (2013) study of information contributed by "alternative journalists" reporting from the streets during the Arab Spring highlighted authentication as a problem. He (2013) explains, "[t]he verification process can often prove challenging when the quality of footage is poor or when the identity of the players in the footage is not clear". As outlined in the studies reviewed earlier in this chapter, material published by participatory journalists via digital and social media platforms is not subject to the same checks as traditional news stories.

When the source of online material is unknown or difficult to trace, verification becomes even more important. In her article about how deeply audiences are now involved in news storytelling, Julie Posetti (2011) queries how journalists should define verification in the age of social media. She asks:

> Can it evolve in the manner of a radio news story, filling in blanks over time? Can it be crowdsourced, with media consumers acting as widely distributed fact-checkers with collective expertise? And what standards of verification and accuracy do audiences expect of professional journalists in the social media sphere? (2011: 8)

Since members of the public mostly document events for personal reasons, rather than professional, they do not consider the need to verify names or ages of people filmed, or the location of the event. This task falls firmly in the camp of the journalist, who is bound by a professional standard, but also the expectations of their readers. In outlining the core principles of journalism, Pew Research Center (2014) states journalism is a "discipline of verification". Expanding on this principle further, Pew Research says (2014), "Journalists rely on a professional discipline for verifying information…Seeking out multiple

witnesses, disclosing as much as possible about sources, or asking various sides for comment, all signal such standards". When it comes to verifying online information, Paul Bradshaw (2011) has a three-step process for checking: content, context and code. He sees the internet as a boon for verification and says, "in many ways the internet gives us extra tools to verify information – certainly more than the phone ever did. The apparent 'facelessness' of the medium is misleading: every piece of information, and every person, leaves a trail of data that you can use to build a picture of its reliability" (2011). Wardle (2013) writes about how news journalists verify user-generated content. Before any piece of information sourced via social media can be published, Wardle argues there are four steps that must be completed first to verify the text. They are provenance, where the journalist checks and confirms the text is an original piece of content; source, which is discovering who uploaded the content; date, when the timing for creation of the text is confirmed; and location, where a journalist finds out where the content was created (Wardle 2013: 26). These steps do not really differ from the accuracy checks traditional news journalists used before the internet, as stated by Pew Research above, which shows that while much has changed in journalism with the addition of social media, there is still more that remains the same.

Hermida (2012) explains that verification methods are evolving through the collaborative storytelling that occurs via social media and traditional media during breaking news stories. He says, "[n]ews organizations are developing new online storytelling methods to take account of the real-time flow of news and information on social networks, particularly in the coverage of breaking news events" (2012: 663). In a later work,

Hermida expands on this point, and says:

> In breaking news situations, events are in constant motion, facts are in flux, and reporting is messy. In a digital media system, gathering, verifying, and reporting the news is done in public. Journalists are one of the many voices, sharing the media space with official sources such as law enforcement and emergency services, witnesses to the event, and those across the world responding and reacting to the news. It amounts to a profound shift as verification moves out of the private space of the newsroom and into the public area of the Internet. (2015: 70)

The "messy" reporting Hermida mentions has become a natural position during crisis reporting, with journalists sharing multiple iterations of the story as more facts come to hand. This in itself shows a development within the practice of journalism, condensing the follow up story timing from the next print edition to the version, with new facts presented and confirmed within minutes at times. A number of tools and services have been developed to help social media users and journalists verify the content they find online. Brandtzaeg, Folstad and Dominguez cite TinEye, Google's reverse image search, FotoForensics and InformaCam as a "…source of support for users, such as journalists, in need of verifying online content" (2018:1112). These verification tools are commonly used, and cited by research interviewees in the discussion section, however the authors found that journalists "…often rely on manual and individual processes to verify and fact-check" or combine traditional journalistic methods with cross-checking via Google search, Facebook and Twitter to verify the texts (2018: 1121). Klas Backholm et al (2017) interviewed European journalists using social media platforms in their everyday work, as well as when reporting on crisis events and found several challenges when using such texts, including lack of guidelines around text use and verification and the volume of information to sort through or filter to find relevant content. The authors found:

> The most common challenges when carrying out validation of content included problems with simultaneously monitoring and filtering out content across vast amounts of information acquired from several platforms, and with backtracking across platforms and reposts to identify the original source. (Backholm et al 2017: 73-74)

A high volume of content can be both a blessing and a curse for a journalists trying to tell a breaking news story; greater content gives more choice, but more choice takes time to sort and verify. Pointing to the insights gained from *Guardian* journalists during this research, Walker explains, "…connecting the dots across multiple sources is not new to journalism, but the techniques have become more sophisticated in recent years, as access to verification tools and digital information, such as video evidence, has grown" (2019: 228). To illustrate how journalists have added the role of "digital sleuth" to their jobs, Walker discusses how journalists at *The New York Times* used forensic reporting techniques to confirm the date, time, and location of a chemical weapons attack in Syria by analysing information from Google Earth, amateur video, eyewitness accounts, and a sun movement app SunCalc (2019: 228). The addition of the online element in news reporting has forced traditional journalistic verification methods to evolve and they will continue to evolve as more platforms and verification tools are introduced.

While the steps to check online sources have been discussed above, the journalistic standards relating the verification of texts sourced online is not covered in detail in the literature. However, there has been an attempt to map general reporting standards relating to new technology, and this area of study has grown in popularity as the use of social media texts in reporting has developed. Deuze (1999) outlines a list of journalism standards for those media professionals who are writing online: hyperlink to sources,

background material, related content and archives; allow the reader to track the reporting and news gathering process; include extensive 'About Us' sections; answer readers' email; send personalised email newsletters; and serve as community resource when operating on a local level (1999: 382-384). In Zubiaga's 2019 study, 20 years after Deuze's journalism standards were published, the author considers how useful data mining social media is as a newsgathering tool. Zubiaga finds social media a worthy source for event detection, news recommenders, summarisation, finding information sources and content validation and verification. He says these methods could be automated to help journalists gather data quicker, but social media posed numerous challenges, mainly around the volume of content available and the ability to check that content in a timely manner. Verifying content becomes vital when proliferating sources are a component, and standards for journalists around this area are investigated further in the later chapters.

The sheer volume, quality and type of material made available online can make the fact-checking process a difficult one for journalists. Jamie Matthews (2013) researched how journalists decide which information to use from the vast amount of material available online and then how to verify it. Explaining this challenge, and how the addition of publicly contributed content affects journalistic practice, Matthews says, "…the proliferation of citizen material is now impacting on journalists and the editorial processes of major news organisations as they develop new verification processes to deal with this type of source material" (2013: 251). Academics and media professionals consider these additional verification processes for online material at length, with Posetti

citing a number of methods used by traditional journalists (2011: 8-9). These processes include the journalist crowdsourcing their own social media networks to get the masses to help verify texts, or responding to tweets by asking for more information or contact details via direct messages, so the journalist can call the source or meet them in person. Shedding more light on this issue, Turner (2012) shares the BBC's verification process. He comments that even the process of checking online content, in addition to a source's response, speaks to their credibility: "The golden rule… is to get on the phone whoever has posted the material". In other words, when checking accuracy becomes a numbers game, the checks must be watertight.

Twitter, and other social media platforms, are regularly accused of being rumour mills, especially during critical events like the England riots and Tasmanian bushfires where information (some of it false) was posted and shared online at an incredible rate. During the 2013 Tasmanian bushfires ABC News correspondent Martin Cuddihy tweeted, "I've heard 2 dead at Dunalley. #tasfires @abcnews" (2013). Both *The Examiner* (2013) and the ABC News website (2013) reported that Tasmanian police were investigating reports of a man who died while defending his home against the bushfire in Dunalley, Tasmania. These rumours were later proven to be incorrect, but had spread quickly online and offline beforehand. Indeed, during the England riots the information overload had reached such dire proportions that Mary Hamilton (2011) published a blog post on how to use Twitter responsibly to stop the spread of misinformation. She explains, "Twitter has been awash with rumour, exaggeration and downright untruth alongside people spreading useful news," as reasons for avoiding inaccurate tweeting (2011). Bruno (2011) sees pros

and cons to tweeting updates without first verifying who posted them and from where. He says, "[t]he 'tweet first, verify later' approach is a great help for source diversification and leads to richer coverage. But this strategy also seems very dangerous for one of journalism's golden rules: each news story must be verified first" (2011: 66). The question with Bruno's approach is whether diverse sources are more important than verified sources, and whether speed is more important than accuracy.

On the other hand, John Herrman (2012) found Twitter was a useful verification tool during fast-moving events, like crises. He explains: "Twitter's capacity to spread false information is more than cancelled out by its savage self-correction", because, "Twitter is a fact-processing machine on a grand scale, propagating then destroying rumors at a neck-snapping pace" (2012). Building on the crowdsourcing verification idea mentioned above, Lewis (2012) researched the professional control and open participation within the news-making process. Lewis cites Andy Carvin as a leader in Twitter text verification: "During the Arab Spring of 2011, he famously gathered and circulated bits of data from disparate sources on Twitter, often asked his nearly 50,000 followers to help confirm information, and altogether organized his tweet stream into a 'living, breathing real-time verification system'" (2012: 851). Once the verification checks of online texts have been carried out, the decision on whether to publish the information, and how, must be made. Hermida explains "[m]ajor news organizations such as the BBC, the *New York Times* and the *Guardian* have published accounts of breaking news events in 'live updates' pages that combine unverified social media content and authenticated professional reports" (2012: 663-64). If the information posted online cannot be verified Posetti says some

news organisations publish material with a disclaimer stating that it is unverified, while other media outlets take the opposing line and vet all tweets before they are published (2011: 8).

The need to check material has seen a number of verification platforms launched to help journalists vetting online sources. In investigating crowdsourced verification tools used during disaster events, Meier (2013) writes about Verily[6] which is an academic research project developed for evidence collection and verification. Patrick Meier (2013) explains: "Social media is increasingly used for communicating during crises. This rise in Big (Crisis) Data means that finding the proverbial needle in the growing haystack of information is becoming a major challenge". Writing about another online verification tool called Citizen Evidence, Joseph Lichterman (2014) says, "[v]erifying user-generated content can be a massive undertaking for news organizations". Lichterman explains (2014) that Amnesty International developed the Citizen Evidence website[7] so journalists can check the accuracy of YouTube videos. A third platform, Checkdesk, uses a number of tools to help journalists to verify information from online sources during breaking news situations. Tom Trewinnard (2014) says Checkdesk employs reverse image searches, image data checks, geolocation reviews to identify landmarks and location, time and date data cross reference checks with weather information. Allan (2019) found electronic technology had developed to the point that people doubted the veracity of photographs because of the number of tools available to modify images to the point the

[6] veri.ly
[7] citizenevidence.org

changes are undetectable. Trewinnard explains Checkdesk was designed to address one of the most significant challenges in reporting breaking news now: "the balance between speed and accuracy" (2014). He says, "[f]or a major breaking news story happening almost anywhere in the world, it is now common to see content emerging almost instantaneously online, posted by onlookers and citizen journalists" (2014). It is this content that professional journalists source via online platforms and then use to tell the wider story, allowing additional voices, story angles and vantage points to be covered. When news of an event hits social media within seconds, tools such as Verily, Citizen Evidence and Checkdesk can help media professionals verify and interpret vast amounts of material and report accurate information quickly. It is these tools that take some of the time out of the checking process for journalists, which helps them meet their audience's immediate need for news, as discussed above. Such tools are in constant development, highlighting another area where there are gaps in knowledge within the discipline of content verification.

Training enhances accuracy

As valuable as 'on the spot' material from participatory journalists can be in reporting on a fast-moving story, it is through news journalists' training and experience that the imperative facts can be gleaned from the vast information library available within online networks (Lewis, Kaufhold and Lasorsa 2010). These authors found:

> For editors opposed to citizen journalism, they emphasized the importance of safeguarding the integrity of what passed through their gates pre-publication-of guarding traditional routines of newsgathering and reporting, and of truth-value and legal

> protection that could only be ensured under the steady hand of trained professionals. (2010: 175)

Building on this argument, Lazaroiu (2012) writes about how amateur's texts have been incorporated into news reporting, but stresses the importance of holding on to traditional journalistic values. In Lazaroiu's words: "The professional standards of journalism are the anchor in a sea of potential confusion" (2012: 145). Also using the aquatic media analogy, Geneva Overholser (2009) researches traditional journalism's place in social media. She explains that, "[b]eing there and being accurate are how journalistic credibility is brought to the social media ocean," because, "…most people don't care as much about who publishes news (or what are often rumors) first these days as they do about whether the sites they rely on have it right when they want it". Berglez's convergent journalism study explains the argument for journalistic professionalism further, by saying "[w]hat is needed in this new technological environment is an enhanced professional news journalism which manages to rigorously check, filter, and organize the vast mess of information in society that is flourishing on the web and elsewhere" (2013: 108). A crisis presents an opportunity to tell a story as it is happening from a mass of sources, revising content as more accurate information comes to light. As Anden-Papadopoulos's study on contributed images used in crisis reporting found: "News organizations are… increasingly giving up attempts to lead on breaking news, focusing instead on verifying and re-mediating the stream of crowd-sourced images and information provided by variegated actors on scene" (2013: 343). In a breaking news situation journalism is understood to be an iterative process, however reporting must still be accurate. This is where a news journalist's training and experience will take precedence over information

reported by a member of the public acting as an amateur reporter. It also opens up the opportunity for media outlets to publish a more analytic story of what happened and how, rather than a blow-by-blow account as news comes to hand.

A further analysis of the concept of breaking news journalism as a fluid progression is covered in studies by Hermida (2012) and Karlsson (2011). Hermida looked at news that was broken on social media and sees, "[j]ournalism is less of a final product presented to the audience as a definitive rendering of events than a tentative and iterative process where contested accounts are examined and evaluated in public in real-time" (2012: 666). Karlsson (2011) explains online news reporting further by saying, "[i]mmediacy means that different provisory, incomplete and sometimes dubious news drafts are published," (2011: 279) and, "[t]he high speed of online news enables the website audience to literally *see* in real time segments of the gathering and processing stages of news work," (2011: 289). An avid audience wants to know what is happening more than it needs to know everything published is true, assuming the truth will be verified during a future part of the reporting process.

The Indian Ocean earthquake discussed above may be considered a turning point for participatory journalism, but it also highlighted the danger in using unverified material. Waldman's study of news reporting after the crisis (2005) found several newspapers were caught out when using a photo taken from the internet. They thought the photo illustrated the 2004 tsunami, but it was actually taken in China two years earlier. He says:

> Ironically, the great danger for traditional media is not that, as many bloggers think, they ignore this eruption of amateur content. It is too rich a source for any half decent desk

> editor to pass by. (Not to mention the fact that it is often free to use). No, the real danger is that editors pounce upon it too quickly and pay the price with their credibility. (2005)

This mis-labelled photo and studies by Bebawi (2013), Hamilton (2011) and Lewis (2012) demonstrate the need for better verification in news reporting during crisis events. When discussing the importance of accuracy and the need for better verification, Trewinnard (2014) highlights the misuse of a photo originally taken in Iraq but published by the BBC to illustrate a story about a Syrian massacre. It is situations like those listed here that lead to questions around the media's credibility and need to be first. Pantti's 2013 study on online footage takes this idea further, with the author saying a news outlet is making "a statement about their ethics and professional codes" by publishing (or not publishing) content that was first published on the internet (2013: 205). An outlet's credibility is at stake in such a situation, meaning the decision should not be taken lightly. Expanding on the idea of media credibility and how this can be impacted through the use of participatory journalism, Allan says:

> For critics, however, citizen journalism's dangers outweigh whatever merits might temporarily catch the eye, with news organisations at serious risk of losing credibility in their rush to embrace forms of reporting they cannot always independently confirm or verify as accurate. (2013: 94-95)

A media outlet's credibility is what distinguishes it as an authority on news when compared to a member of the public with a smart phone taking photos and live-tweeting from an event. This leads to questions about what a person's intention is when capturing and sharing information, along with how that information is received and interpreted by its audience.

When a viewer or reader sees an image, video or update posted by a member of the public on the internet or social media they may see it as a representation of what is happening where that person is and assume they are simply sharing that experience. Indeed, Allan (2013) backs up this argument in finding that members of the public are not always consciously engaging in acts of journalism when posting information online. He explains, "[f]or the ordinary individual, however, any sense of journalism is likely to be far from their mind, should they find themselves unexpectedly caught-up in disturbing events rapidly unfolding around them" (2013: 1). However, if the online text was published in a print or online newspaper, the reader would hold that information to a higher standard because of the credibility that media outlet possesses.

News journalists have the ability to organise masses of information, ordering the facts from most important to least, and presenting this in a format that can be easily consumed by readers. In their assessment of digital and social media, Bainbridge, Beasley and Tynan (2011) explain there is a marked difference between how a traditional journalist interprets information for their audience and how a member of the public would explain the same to their networks. The authors say:

> While anyone can relay what they are seeing, the journalist is uniquely positioned to offer informed commentary, analysis, synthesis and collaboration… without the skills of journalistic practice, citizen journalists may not be able to contextualise, analyse or distance themselves from what they are seeing occur around them. (2011: 365)

Again, journalistic training and experience comes into play in telling readers what is happening at the scene. In studying the evolution of journalism to a more diverse model

with additional players, McNair (2009) queries who takes on the check and balance role a traditional journalist plays when researching a news story. He asks, "[i]f the professional–amateur boundary dissolves, who or what will do the sense-making and the sifting of complex reality which has been one of journalism's key functions?" (2009: 349). Mare (2013) also discussed this challenge to traditional journalistic practice in his study of news reporting during social protests in Africa. He says professional journalists had a "…time-honoured approach of 'verify first and publish later'", whereas, "citizen journalists resorted to a 'tweet/post first and verify later' approach" (2013: 90). While the journalists' approach meant they were behind the amateurs in breaking the news items during the southern African social protests, it showed their adherence to professional codes were more important than being first. It is the practice of professional journalism that sets traditional news and participatory journalists apart. One is trained to seek out something newsworthy from an event and explain that event, while the other is sharing their experience of a newsworthy event from the scene. The different approaches to publishing content on social media between professional and participatory journalists highlights the three themes this thesis is investigating: when information about a crisis is published, whether that information can be verified and the ethical considerations around what is being published.

Social media and journalistic ethics

In a similar study to Mare's (2013) analysis of digital sources used by journalists during the 2011 African social protests, Levi Obijiofor (2009) researched how journalists at four

Nigerian newspapers reported on the 2008 Niger Delta conflict. He studied how the journalists used material from technological sources, such as email and social platforms, and how those texts were verified before publication. Obijiofor (2009) concludes that new technology did make it possible for news journalists to access important information relating to the conflict, but verifying the anonymous texts resulted in "…ethical and professional issues when journalists rely on e-mail-based messages without verifying the source and the information" (2009: 199). Similar to the findings presented by Mare (2013) and Allan (2013), Obijiofor found that journalists who published unverified content "violate one of the canons of professional journalism practice that requires accuracy and cross-checking of information" (2009: 199). Anden-Papadopoulos and Pantti (2013) also consider the ethical considerations journalists are presented with around using material from participatory journalists in their study on crisis reporting (see also Mortensen, Allan and Peters 2017). These authors explain that publishing such texts challenges traditional journalistic values:

> …the unique news value and emotional power assigned to eyewitness footage shot by 'ordinary' people at the scene of crisis events suggests that these visual testimonies have the potential to push the boundaries of the profession of journalism, leading to a rethinking of key principles such as impartiality, verification and professional exclusivity. (2013: 964)

While amateur content may force a rethink of journalistic values, it is only to the extent that these pillars of professional integrity are tested at times, but never replaced. A participatory journalist could break a story at the scene, but the analysis comes from the research, additional voices and context a professional journalist adds to explain the full story. Corinne Barnes (2012) tracks the evolution of citizen, or participatory, journalism

in her study, highlighting the ethical differences between reporting conducted by professionals and amateurs. She says one of the main differences are the "issues of ethics" because "those who are untrained" do not understand, nor adhere to, professional news guidelines (2012: 20). Barnes contends, for this reason, "[t]he lines between mainstream journalism and citizen journalism should therefore not be blurred, and the distinction is important" (2012: 20). Ethical differences, along with the speed at which the content is published, can make it easier to pick between amateur and professional news content, but audiences hungry for information do not always check for accuracy, often taking what they read at face value. Technology may have opened up the reporting ability for participatory journalists to share their own texts, but it equally opens up issues around verification for those professionals sharing the amateur texts. The professionals will be held to account if the information is found to be incorrect.

Williams, Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen's BBC UGC study found, "…long-established reporting practices such as ensuring accuracy, authenticity, and impartiality are of paramount importance to the journalists when dealing with audience material" (2011: 93). As mentioned above, the relationships journalists have with their audience has not changed when it comes to submitting material, such as story ideas, images and video, for use in researching or publishing a news story. What has changed is the way technology has enabled such material to be contributed quickly and in high volume from many sources. Quoting a BBC Hub reporter, Williams, Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen say "…you have to put all of this in context: there have always been eye-witnesses, it's just we can get to them quicker now" (2011: 95). That speed in turning around information can make

all the difference when it comes to covering a breaking news story, like a major crisis, with quicker reporting adding an extra element to that relationship between eyewitness, journalist, audience and the resulting story in a 24-hour news cycle. Zelizer's (2007) research on eyewitnessing adds more insight to this relationship between professional journalists and the audience. In her words: "With private citizens now increasingly filling in as eyewitnesses, the proximity and immediacy they provide qualify as grounds for eyewitnessing" (2007: 421). The ability to be in the right place at the right time and be able to share information about a newsworthy event quickly is a key factor in the argument for using participatory journalists' texts.

In the highly connected, global world of the first decades in the 21st century, information is considered a premium resource. When news organisations around the world compete to cover the same story, information that can be captured and published from the on the ground is highly valued by both legacy media and its audience. Traditional journalists are working to stamp their authority on the credibility of their news stories. As Beate Josephi explains, the increasingly participatory nature of media as a whole, has forced professional journalists to distinguish themselves from amateurs who also provide information during newsworthy events. She says they "seek ever more to point to their professional necessity in filtering multiple sources and providing credible and reliable news" (2014: 116). When standards of journalism are the driving factor at play, the race between the media, whether that is traditional news media outlets or social media networks, ceases to be about who has the news first, but who has it right.

This literature review spanned academic research into the state of journalism now, and how the industry has responded to technological advances. It explores journalistic practice, and its relationship to participatory journalism; social media, and the way technological platforms are used to report on crisis events; and professionalism within journalism. Once established, the review delves deeper into the three key areas that are relevant to the way in which traditional journalists use social media texts to report on crisis events. These are: speed, veracity and ethics. Academic debate around the relevance of public participation in news reporting; the platforms traditional news journalists and participatory journalists use to report events, particularly crisis events; and the value of accuracy versus breaking the news have all been discussed in this chapter. Arguments presented here are considered further in the background and discussion chapter, with added insight from data analysis and research interviews. The next chapter presents the research methods used to analyse how social media texts were used by *The Guardian* to report on three significant UK crisis events.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research approach for this project began with data collected from articles published in *The Guardian* about the three crisis events investigated: London Bombings, England Riots and Lee Rigby's murder. Data collected was used to inform the research interviews with professional journalists, editors and social media users. This chapter outlines the methodological background and the development and implementation of methods used to carry out this research. The thesis draws upon a qualitative research approach using semi-structured interviews to investigate how traditional newspaper journalists at *The Guardian* use social media texts to report on crisis events and explains the approach behind that methodology. This method and the research design and sample are introduced here, along with the development of the thesis over time and an explanation of the ethical considerations relating to this thesis.

The chapter situates the research approach within a philosophical tradition of social constructivism in that the knowledge gained from studying the references to, and use of, social media texts in newspaper articles set the scene and informed the interview questions later asked of the research participants. This methodology explains how *Guardian* journalists used texts shared by social media users in their reportage of three crises, and then shows how and why these texts were used within crisis reporting through data gained via interviewing those professionals.

Methodology

This thesis investigates how journalists at *The Guardian* use, and understand, the incorporation of social media into crisis reporting. To gain a full appreciation of this influence, print newspaper reporting on three significant crisis events was analysed (Krippendorff 2004), with this data used to formulate questions asked during in-depth research interviews with media professionals and social media users (Legard, Keegan and Ward 2003). I followed David Morgan's (2014) and Jannis Kallinikos's (2004) work on constructivism, a system that leans towards qualitative research, because it explains the importance of context and meaning when building knowledge. My research developed around a desire to understand journalistic work practices in using social media within crisis reporting, which came about through my understanding that context is important when covering a breaking news event.

There is a well-documented tradition in social constructivist frameworks that speaking to people extends knowledge, with new learning experiences building on existing understandings and influences. This theoretical position can be viewed through qualitative research methods, such as interviews. Steve Paulussen and Pieter Ugille (2008) used semi-structured interviews with newsroom staff at newspapers and a community website to show that their adoption of social media platforms in a professional capacity resulted from a combination of economic and social factors, with interaction at professional and social levels. This approach also points to ideas discussed by David Domingo et al (2008), who use a constructivist approach in their study of

journalism to explain that some journalistic functions can be performed by individuals in explaining the concept of participatory journalism (2008: 331). These perspectives were useful when developing my research methodology as it explained how knowledge was constructed through interviews and how participatory journalists could use traditional journalistic devices to share knowledge. Using insights into qualitative methods from David Silverman (2014) and Morgan, the interviews conducted for this project reflect the constructivist model because, as professional journalists and social media users, the research subjects "are part of the world they describe" (Silverman 2014: 184). This project does not set out to make generalisations about how social media texts are used by all journalists all of the time, but instead provides insight into how journalists at *The Guardian* in England, UK, used social media texts to report on three crisis events, with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the relevance of social media platforms for crisis reporting.

This thesis uses three qualitative case studies to carry out a longitudinal investigation of the use of social media in news production over an eight-year period. This project follows *The Guardian*'s crisis reporting across three events between 2005 and 2013, tracking insights from journalists and social media users. This project draws upon a rich history of qualitative methods in the study of journalism, by considering "the diversity of meanings and values created in the media" (Brennan 2012: 5). In this way, qualitative approaches allow for different perspectives to be understood. Such approaches build on a strong tradition of going beyond the textual data to investigate journalistic practice during major events, as Allan illustrated in his body of work about reporting during crises (2007, 2013,

2014, 2015). All four research questions, outlined in Chapter One, are answered via the insights gained during in-depth interviews, with this method illustrating how journalistic use of social media has evolved via crisis reporting to become a significant news source, reporting tool and publishing platform.

This thesis investigates journalists' use of social media to understand how this disruptive technology has come to shape the practice of crisis reporting. Studying a crisis through the lens of social media allows the event to be viewed almost as it happens (Zubiaga et al 2019; Zubiaga 2019), with its repercussions and implications observed as the event continues to develop in the days and weeks afterwards (Zubiaga 2019). Tracking the three UK crisis events and how they were reported in *The Guardian* from the day they happened through to a fortnight afterwards allows for the initial response by both the media and public to be captured for analysis, but also the subsequent follow-up articles, retelling of events, additions of evidence and reports on arrests, where relevant. This research project sits within the space where the story told for each of the three crisis events has unfolded more fully, allowing me, as the researcher, to gain a deeper understanding of how traditional and new forms of media texts have been used to report those events. This understanding informed the questions asked of professional journalists and editors and social media users, forming a strong basis on which to draw out the key themes and responses explored later in the data analysis section.

Method

This thesis used interviews with nine journalists and editors at The Guardian and four social media users to provide a deeper understanding of how journalists understand and implement social media into crisis reporting. As with the study of journalism, the analysis of social media has significantly developed over the past decade, with investigation into its impact on the practice of journalism forming a significant area of academic research. I drew on exemplars of the confluence between crisis reporting and participatory journalists using social media when designing research methods for this project (see Allan 2013; Cottle 2013, 2019; Pantti 2013; Holt and Karlsson 2015), adopting a qualitative research position to focus on the insights gained through interviews with media professionals and social media users. This approach also follows research by Matt Carlson et al, who found interviews were commonly used in studies "designed to investigate people and their perceptions or use of social media, themes in social media content, or a combination of both" (2018: 18) and Thomas Lindlof and Bryan Taylor, who consider interviews to be "one of the pre-eminent methods in communication studies" (2011: 172). Both approaches proved useful here as the purpose of conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews was to investigate the editorial decision-making around including social media texts in crisis reporting. Research by Chareen Snelson (2016), who studied people's interactions with social media and the content they posted on varying platforms over a similar time frame to the cases contained within this thesis, and Seth Lewis and Logan Molyneux (2018), who investigated the interconnectivity of the two fields to question judgements formed around social media's impact on

journalism, were also useful guideposts for my methodological design. Further rationale for interview as a research method follows in the data collection section of this chapter.

Selecting *The Guardian* and scoping the crises

When I began this study there were multiple ways to limit the scope of the research to answer my research questions. *The Guardian* and the three crises were carefully selected in order to illustrate how one media outlet's practice around social media use in crisis reporting evolved over time. As mentioned in Chapter One, the reasons *The Guardian* was chosen for this thesis are its reputation as an early adopter when it came to utilising user-generated content, its status as a "leading online newspaper" (Domingo et al 2008: 333) in the UK and I was living in the country at the time on the London Bombings so was able to see this crisis reporting first hand. In addition, while *The Guardian* is based in London, it is a national newspaper, whereas many of the major newspapers in the US or Australia are tied to place, even if they report on national issues. As such, *The Guardian* is more likely to report closely on UK matters with a global audience in mind via its increased online distribution. As Cook and Dickinson explain:

> *The Guardian* is widely perceived as being successful in putting user content on a quality level parallel to the criteria applied to the rest of the journalistic provision. It could be argued that some mainstream newsrooms are acknowledging the relative permanence of citizen journalism as part of quality news production in creating roles and positions with a specific remit for user-generated content. (2014: 211)

Its commitment to participatory journalism made *The Guardian* a suitable case for studying the use of social media texts within crisis reporting. This thesis is a useful

contribution to existing studies because it explores an evolution in journalistic crisis reporting at one outlet through the themes of speed, veracity and ethics, unlike Allan's approach which looked at the development of citizen journalism and crisis reporting, or Adams' (2016) work on *The Guardian*'s audience engagement.

Choosing case studies of crisis reporting within *The Guardian* was also crucial to a clear research design to ensure that my interviews were directed around particular points of interest, which allowed me to compare the evolution of the newspaper's approach to crisis reporting over time. Case study is one of the dominant modes of research in the humanities and social sciences. It is defined as "...an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin 1994: 13). Three cases were selected to facilitate a deeper understanding of crisis reporting in practical terms, as outlined in research by Tanni Haas (2004) and Clem Adelman, David Jenkins and Stephen Kemmis (2006). Crisis events, and the way they have been reported by traditional journalists, make suitable cases for such in-depth research because they are fast-moving, active instances where accurate information is a premium resource. Exploring the editorial decisions made during crisis reporting was important to see how social media texts were used during these cases and understand why such texts had become important when covering fast-moving events. I wanted to investigate the why and how behind the use of such texts to report on crises and the way this practice evolved, which called for multiple cases. A variety of evidence was needed to determine how journalistic and newsroom practice evolved through the use of social media texts in

The Guardian's reporting. I adopted a similar approach to Haas's 2004 *Akron Beacon Journal* case study as it focused on qualitative data collection at one media outlet.

As explained in the Introduction of this thesis, I observed media coverage of the London Bombings while living in England during 2005, which led me to question how social media had changed the practice of journalism from my viewpoint as a professional reporter. This project has evolved over time, starting with the question above, but has ended with a more specific aim of conducting in-depth research into one publication's crisis reporting evolution. Choosing one outlet also allowed me to examine the impact of social media on crisis reporting in much greater detail, encouraging familiarity with any changes to the method and discursive nature of *The Guardian's* reporting over time. As new social media platforms were introduced and participatory journalists became more familiar – and more confident – with sharing their experiences via the internet, the use of social media texts as news sources also developed at *The Guardian*.

Starting with the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, I originally aimed to track the relevance of social media during eight crisis events from four countries: USA, UK, India and Australia. The September 11 terrorist attacks were to form the baseline case study from which to illustrate how a crisis event was covered before social media became a mainstream tool for journalists. I selected mastheads in the city where each crisis occurred so I could track how social media texts factored into traditional newspaper coverage of each event, whether social media texts were used as news sources and if this use changed over time. Additionally, I selected one national newspaper in each of the four

countries to compare the media reports of the crisis events on a local and national level. The initial proposed thesis was as follows:

Crisis Event	**City Masthead**	**National Masthead**
September 11 Terrorist Attacks	*New York Times*	*USA Today*
London Bombings	*The Independent*	*The Guardian*
Southern California Wildfires	*San Francisco Chronicle*	*USA Today*
Mumbai Terrorist Attacks	*The Times of India*	*The Indian Express*
Victorian Black Saturday Bushfires	*The Herald Sun*	*The Australian*
England Riots	*The Times*	*The Guardian*
Tasmanian Bushfires	*The Mercury*	*The Australian*
Boston Bombings	*Boston Herald*	*USA Today*

Table 1: Original crisis/masthead research plan

After commencing my data collection, I realised that the broad geographic, textual and temporal scope of my case studies would result in only a superficial understanding of crisis reporting over time – which detoured from the intention of my research. Comparing multiple case studies across the world was unwieldy, and was drawing my work away from my initial research questions, so I pared down the scope of my thesis to enable me to dig deeper into media coverage to gain a greater understanding of the impact of social media. This project was not intended to be an overview of social media's place within crisis reporting, rather I intended it to be an in-depth study of the impact of this disruptive communication tool. As a result I chose three events that occurred in the UK between 2005 and 2013 and narrowed my analysis to one masthead.

A smaller, but robust, sample of three case studies provided a longitudinal study on which to assess the evolution of journalistic practice and the affect social media texts have had on journalistic development, specifically within crisis reporting at *The Guardian*. I

needed to find a way into the data I knew from my own observations about social media texts in crisis reporting, but had to remove myself from the line of query to ensure there was no bias, so I interviewed professional journalists and social media users to gain their insights on practice. I knew this updated plan would enable me to identify the research participants who had reported on more than one crisis to compare and contrast the case studies within my thesis. The crisis events covered here are London Bombings in 2005, England Riots in 2011 and Lee Rigby's murder in 2013. Each case was analysed to assess how traditional journalists at *The Guardian* reported on these crises, as well as the tools they used in that practice, and the impact this had on the quality of theirs', and their colleagues', reporting.

Data collection and analysis

Having seen how *The Guardian* reported on the London Bombings using content sourced from people at the scene, and then following its coverage of the England Riots and Lee Rigby's murder, I was intrigued about how social media texts came to be a tool for journalists covering crisis events and how these texts were sourced. To gain a better understanding of *Guardian* journalists' use of social media content I comparatively analysed reportage of each of the three crisis events as separate cases. This enabled me to determine the role social media played in the construction of print news texts at each point within the eight years covered (see Messner and Distaso 2008; Obijiofor 2009; Williams, Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen 2011; Colic-Peisker, Mikola and Dekker 2016; McLinden and Barclay 2018). There is a dominant understanding that content analysis is

the best way to "…categorise, analyse and evaluate any news report or feature story" (Morris 2004: 165). This method proved useful to isolate social media text use for later discussion during interviews, the research method used to determine the reasons journalists included those texts in their reporting. This content analysis resulted in a final sample of 887 *Guardian* articles written specifically about the three cases, and it was from this sample that I determined the impact of social media text use within *The Guardian*'s crisis reporting and planned research questions for my interviews.

While the research sample of 887 *Guardian* articles gave me the data I needed to see how the outlet's journalists reported on the three events, and which journalists covered the three crises, this analysis did not go as far as I wanted in determining which social media texts were used and how they were included. To gain this additional level of insight, data from *The Guardian*'s print news articles were closely read and coded by isolating key words (Hall and Hall 2004; Knight 2012; Williams, Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen 2011). This analysis explained the social media platforms used, how many such texts were used as reference points and news sources (Lee 2006) and the resulting impact on journalistic integrity when it came to verifying and referencing the content. This detail was important when it came to my research interviews with *Guardian* journalists and editors because I could ask questions about the editorial decisions surrounding specific texts.

Each of the 887 articles within the research sample were read to identify key words relating to social media texts, with 167 articles identified where social media platforms or texts were mentioned or a social media text was used as a news source (see Table 2 in

Appendix 1). These articles were coded by the type of text used, such as photo, video, tweet, Facebook post, or unspecified user-generated content, to show the platforms and social media texts *Guardian* journalists used while reporting on these cases (see Table 3 in Appendix 1). Breaking the data down by date and text type highlighted the days where social media text use peaked and which texts were most prevalent for each event (see Tables 4, 5 and 6 in Appendix 2), and this is discussed in the following data analysis and presentation chapter (see Graph 1).

Of course, merely counting instances and occurences of text type does not provide a full picture of journalistic practices – which is at the heart of this thesis. However, it did provide a useful foundation for developing the thematic interests of my interviews and ensured I was intimately familiar with the timeline and approach towards each crisis reporting case study. While it provided me with this foundation, qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews further developed these findings. The mixed-method approach here allowed for a deeper level of analysis that was conducted through the lenses of speed, verification and ethics and considered time difference between news items about crises breaking on social media and reported in traditional media in print or online, the accuracy of the information breaking on social media during the crisis events using historical data, and the ways in which the information sourced from social media texts was verified by journalists and/or editors.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews

Once I understood how the social media texts were used in crisis reporting, I employed

this data during semi-structured in-depth interviews to gain further insight into the editorial decisions made around how crisis events were reported. Semi-structured interviews are inherent to the work practices of journalists and editors, who each day ask similar questions of their subjects in order to research story topics. There is an academic tradition in journalism studies around using interviews as a research method (Groot Kormelink 2020), however my chosen method turns the questions around, so to speak, enabling me to document participants' knowledge and understanding of evolving crisis reporting practice when it comes to social media text use. There are differences between research-focused interviewing, like I conducted for this thesis, and journalistsic interviewing - such as the more formal nature of research interviews through participant's written permission and transcript approval, ethical approval and the scope of questioning – however there are also similarities in building rapport, seeking knowledge and probing further for greater understanding. Asking *Guardian* journalists and editors about their work practice and thoughts about past crisis reporting events is similar to the method Oren Meyers' and Roei Davidson's used when interviewing journalists about their life histories, where "interviewees are asked to reflect on their own professional path" (2017: 278). Questions form the very basis of day-to-day conversation and are asked to gather information and establish common viewpoints and pace the interview, or as Lindlof and Taylor put it, questions are "potent tools for starting dialogue moving along a certain track or for switching tracks later" (2011: 199). To take these concepts further, questions are asked in an interview to understand a topic and discover enough information to support a hypothesis on that topic.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were chosen over questionnaires or surveys as the preferred research method because of the level of detail interviewee responses were expected to produce (Legard, Keegan and Ward 2003). Interview interactions allow for deeper probing of chosen topics following a general plan of inquiry, and gives the opportunity to explore ideas further, if needed, to create knowledge and understanding, following research by Earl Babbie (2014) and Irene Hall and David Hall (2004). As a "qualitative interview is essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent", interviews allowed points highlighted in *The Guardian* news articles to be questioned and clarified (Babbie 2014: 336). The use of open questions and discussion within the flexible structure of an interview enabled the media professionals and social media users to explain the circumstances around their reporting or editorial decisions, elaborate on their responses and clarify complex points.

Using interviews also allowed space for interviewees to deviate from planned questions to explore topics in more detail via responses to follow-up questions, or present ideas which I, as the researcher, did not anticipate being important to the study. For example, there were a number of instances where I found social media texts were used as news sources to report on the crisis events (using data from the newspaper articles already outlined above) and wanted to know more about the process the journalists used to find and verify those texts. The semi-structured nature of the interviews meant I was able to probe research participants for further information on such points of interest once we had built a rapport. Robin Legard et al articulate the interview as generating "material" that

emerges from the "interaction between the researcher and interviewee" (2003: 141), with such material representing journalistic insights about crisis reporting and social media use. Such data was especially relevant to this examination of journalistic practice, given the limited number of studies on social media as a news source.

While the content analysis showed, in a limited capacity, which social media texts were used in crisis reporting and how, these qualitative interviews instead informed and gave meaning to the more quantitative findings of my original analysis, as they provided insight into the journalistic attitudes around those editorial decisions – something that is not obvious from content analysis alone. Although understanding which texts were used is important, this thesis is fundamentally concerned with understanding how journalists and editors make sense of these changes, and how their work practice evolved as a result. Interviews are considered a key method in the qualitative research tradition and, in this instance, they give a deeper insight into the lived experience of crisis reporting. The interviews conducted for this project provided greater understanding around the journalistic practice for crisis reporting, traditional journalists' attitudes towards social media as a research tools and a news source and also illustrated the editorial decision-making processes related to the use of social media texts in the reporting of crisis events. This approach followed a similar method to my own journalistic interview style, developed over many years in the profession. It allowed me to compare different participant responses to the same questions about crisis reporting to investigate the three themes of speed, veracity and ethics that were explored in this thesis.

Once participants had approved their interview transcript as an accurate reflection of our interview, individual responses were compared and contrasted to establish thematic arguments. This analysis was undertaken in a variety of ways: by case (London bombings, England Riots and Lee Rigby's murder); interviewee type (journalist, editor or social media user); question (for example, responses to social media platforms used, accuracy checks or editorial direction); and opinions (for example, responses to social media contribution to crisis reporting or how social media texts can be used in the future). This approach follows Kathryn Roulston, who suggests qualitative researchers use a range of methods to represent data "including themes supported by direct quotations from interview transcripts… and narratives that represent participants' experiences and perspectives" (2014: 305). I drew out themes similar to Singer (2012) and Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti (2013) around interative reporting from the scene of a crisis and the ethics of doing this, and used these to help create insights into rereading the crises through the lens of journalists' and editors' experiences. These themes and how they are categorised to formulate the evolution of, and changing attitudes towards, social media text use in crisis reporting are discussed in the following chapters.

At times I draw on data from the content analysis outlined above, but this data does not give the full picture, which is why research interviews were chosen as the main method for this thesis. The primary benefits of semi-structured interviews were being able to explore the editorial decision-making process around including social media texts in *The Guardian*'s crisis reporting and gaining professional insights into how social media has become part of journalistic practice, however this research method presented some

weaknesses. These limitations included the time taken to contact almost 90 journalists, editors and social media users to explain the project and seek their participation in an interview to ensure I had a relevant cross section of experience. Time was also a factor when it came to transcribing each interview and then having the transcript approved by each interviewee. More generally, this method can be limited by the interviewer's experience and knowledge of the topic, and questions asked can be leading, which could create bias within the research sample.

The interviews undertaken for this thesis allowed me access to the thoughts and opinions of professional journalists and editors and social media users, thus giving me important insights for analysis. Similar interviews were also used in two 2013 studies into journalism practice by Canter and Anden-Papdopoulos and Pantti. Canter investigated the motivations behind UK news organisations inviting submitted content and journalistic opinion towards participatory journalists, while Anden-Papdopoulos and Pantti studied Finnish and Swedish news journalists' attitudes towards citizen witnessing. These authors included honest accounts from the journalists interviewed that pointed to a changing attitude towards submitted material in crisis reporting, presenting similar themes around participatory journalism, submitted social media content and verification to the interviews conducted with media professionals for this thesis.

Participant recruitment

Journalists and editors who worked at *The Guardian* during one or more of the three crisis events studied were selected for interview to speak about their own and their colleagues' use (or non-use) of social media texts as research tools and news sources. Social media users whose texts were published in crisis reports were also interviewed. Ethics approval was sought for these interviews, with the names of 13 research interviewees included at Appendix 3.

As I was reviewing *The Guardian*'s news articles by case, I noted the bylines of the journalists who had been involved in covering each crisis event. I drew up a list of 67 preferred journalists to contact as research participants, with potential interviewees identified during the first stage of data analysis explained above. My list did not include every journalist who wrote about one of the three crises in *The Guardian*; instead preference was given to journalists based on the number of times each had written about the crisis events covered. Some journalists on the list had written multiple articles on one crisis and some covered all three events for *The Guardian*, making them my preferred research subjects. I selected journalists who had written more than one article, preferably a body, about each crisis event, as this would make them more expert on that case.

Once the list of preferred journalists was finalised the means of contacting those journalists had to be considered. Initially I looked for the journalist's contact details via

their online profile on *The Guardian*'s website[8] to see which journalists still worked at the newspaper. I determined how many were still employed by the newspaper by checking *The Guardian*'s 'Contributor' list, which gave a biography for each person listed and links to their articles. The masthead's 'Contact Us' page directed that queries for individual journalists should be sent using the firstname.lastname@theguardian.com format. Most journalists on my list were still at *The Guardian* so this contact method could be used for many, but for those who were not working at the newspaper I searched for them via Google to find their current workplace, blog, Twitter or LinkedIn profile. Once this information was found I contacted each journalist on my list to request an interview.

It was easy to find most of the journalists whose bylines were highlighted in the newspaper article data collection stage, but securing an interview with some of them proved difficult for three main reasons: they had left their position at *The Guardian*, did not understand how they could contribute to my research, or did not want to be interviewed. Several, however, saw the value of my research and their input, and were very willing to participate. Several indicated they would like to see a copy of the project once finished. Of the 67 professional journalists and editors contacted, 25 agreed to receive the project information sheet. Of these 25, 10 agreed to be interviewed. One journalist later removed herself from the project after her interview, leaving nine media professionals remaining as research subjects.

[8] theguardian.com

The professional journalists interviewed, and the crises they covered, were:

1. Stephen Bates, who reported on the London Bombings and England Riots
2. Ben Quinn, who reported on the England Riots and Lee Rigby murder
3. Duncan Campbell, who reported on the London Bombings
4. Laura Smith, who reported on the London Bombings
5. Shiv Malik, who reported on Lee Rigby's murder
6. Peter Walker, who reported on the England Riots and Lee Rigby's murder
7. Andrew Sparrow, who reported on Lee Rigby's murder
8. Laura Oliver, who oversaw *The Guardian*'s news communities team and was involved in the initial stages of GuardianWitness
9. Neil McIntosh, who was Guardian Unlimited assistant editor during the London Bombings and then became BBC Online managing editor.

Four social media users, whose texts were used by professional journalists in crisis reporting, were also interviewed for this research project. These people are four of 10 social media users contacted to be part of this research project. Some of the social media users contacted were chosen for their direct involvement in producing texts that were mentioned in the articles analysed for this project, or other articles about the three crisis events published by different media outlets. Finding social media users who were willing to be interviewed about their contribution to reporting on crisis events proved more difficult than setting up the professional journalist and editor interviews. One social media user – Boya Dee, whose Twitter texts featured heavily in the Lee Rigby case – did

not respond to repeated interview requests via email and Twitter.

The remaining social media users were chosen as their social media texts presented valuable source material for journalists during other crisis events. The interviews with social media users provided insight into why people contribute their own texts during crisis events and how they do this. It also gave me an understanding of the journalistic practice around crisis reporting through a user's eyes, along with examples of how social media texts were verified. This data illustrated the editorial decision-making processes relating to the use of social media as a news source during the crisis events.

The social media users interviewed, and the crises they contributed texts to, were:

1. Alfie Dennen, who shared texts during the London Bombings in 2005
2. Gareth Corfield, who shared texts during the England Riots in 2011
3. Melanie Irons, who shared texts during the Tasmanian bushfires in 2013
4. Eliot Higgins, who blogged as Bellingcat during many crisis events.

The media professionals and social media users interviewed for this thesis do not represent all *Guardian* journalists and editors employed between 2005 and 2013, or the wider population of social media users between the same time frame. This is a highly selective research sample comprising predominantly male journalists and social media users living in England. Of the media professionals interviewed, seven were male and

two were female, while the social media user sample comprised three men and one woman.

Interviewing research participants

A semi-structured in-depth interview approach was taken to glean research insights, with information sharing and open-ended questions setting up a discussion akin to a talk between peers. As I have discussed, the content analysis I originally conducted informed these research interviews with 13 participants. Rapport was established with interviewees initially through introducing myself and the research topic and then starting with general questions about social media text use in crisis reporting (Lindlof and Taylor 2011). Once a connection was established through initial questions and active listening, my questioning became more specific about participants' practice during the crisis cases and their opinions about editorial decisions.

Each of these semi-structured in-depth interviews with journalists, editors and social media users lasted approximately 30 minutes and were conducted by telephone and Skype from Launceston, Tasmania, between February and June 2016. None of the research participants were located near the researcher; in fact most of the interviewees lived in England, making face-to-face interviews impossible. Using technology to communicate with the research participants was a good alternative, with interview calls made via telephone using an international calling card and communication software product Skype. The Skype interviews were a combination of voice calls, to a phone

number or a computer, which were possible once the interviewee gave appropriate Skype contact information. While the majority of research calls happened at the agreed time without incident, there were some that were cut short and rescheduled due to the interviewee's work commitments, such as a breaking story. Some interviews were impacted by lagging sound and connection issues via Skype. These were minor problems, and all interviews were completed satisfactorily, but it should be noted that technology like Skype can affect the natural flow of conversation in a way that differs from face-to-face interviews.

A list of pre-prepared questions (as submitted during the ethics approval process) were asked during each interview (12 questions for journalists, 11 for editors and six for social media users), with follow-up questions asked to gain further information or clarify points discussed. The interview recordings were transcribed into a Word document, which was then sent to the research participant for review and approval before being used in this project. The original research participant target was 20, but the sample size concluded with 13. This final figure of 13 research participants still provided a good cross section of experience, opinion and views on the relevance of social media texts when reporting on crisis events. The benefits of interviews are the opportunity to realise in-depth insights into journalistic practice and validate the data collected using other research methods. However, as this research method is qualitative, rather than quantitative, the insights gained might be more valid from a journalistic practice point of view than a quantitative sample, but are not statistically accurate.

Beyond gaining an understanding of the professional and amateur response to the use of social media texts in crisis reporting, data collected during the 13 interviews were analysed for the key themes of speed, verification and ethics. This analysis, which is included in the following chapter, gives rich insights into *The Guardian*'s newsroom practice over eight years, but also into the changing attitudes of journalists and the public towards contributed content from various social media platforms being included in crisis reporting. Such deep analysis closes the loop on the constructivist methodology described at the beginning of this chapter, showing how professional journalists and social media users really are part of the world they discussed in their responses.

Ethical considerations

Each research participant voluntarily agreed to take part in this project after I explained my aims in undertaking the research and my plans for it to be published as a PhD thesis (Brennan 2012: 16), and again once they approved their interview transcript. Research participants signed a consent form with the clause: "I agree that my name may be used and identity disclosed in publications resulting from this research", allowing interviewees to be named and quoted. The only foreseeable risk for research participants during this project was one of discomfort (National Health and Medical Research Council 2014). Discomfort of research subjects was considered because the interviewees are journalists, editors and social media users who were recalling and discussing their professional practice and actions during a past event. Participants were asked to reveal aspects of their media practices and editorial decision-making (for journalists and editors) or online

practice (for social media users) during crisis events. As they were discussing their work in reporting on or social media use during crises, there was a chance they could feel uncomfortable or distressed in the recollection of their practice during that event. The Dart Center for Journalism's *Tragedies & Journalists* handbook notes traumatic events can have lasting affects for those reporting on the event, not just those involved in the crisis. Handbook authors Joe Hight and Frank Smyth write:

> Reporters, editors, photojournalists and news crews are involved in the coverage of many tragedies during their lifetimes. They range from wars to terrorist attacks to airplane crashes to natural disasters to fires to murders. All having victims. All affecting their communities. All creating lasting memories. (2003: 2)

Bearing this potential impact in mind, I explained that if a research participant found a question too difficult they could request to pause or discontinue the interview without consequence. I also explained they could withdraw from the project at any time, with one of the journalists interviewed taking up that offer after reviewing her transcript.

Each of the crises I spoke to research participants about involved death and violence, so I directed the interviewees towards support materials from organisations that were available for participants. While each professional research participant reported on the crisis events as part of their role as a journalist, the impact of recalling and speaking about those traumatic events can still be a factor, as outlined in the Dart Center's handbook above. Dave Eggers, who wrote *Voice of Witness*, spoke about the ethical struggle surrounding establishing a relationship with someone whose story you are

telling. Eggers' findings informed views on the implications around asking interviewees to recall potentially traumatic events:

> One of the things journalists and human rights workers who take these accounts might be feeling is that feeling that they've emotionally drained somebody or retraumatized them, and then left. And in many case they've left the person with nothing, and the person has nothing to show for it … And I think without leaving them with anything tangible, we as interviewers can get a sense that we've stolen something. (in Dawes 2007: 176)

There are two levels of ethical difficulty with this situation. As journalists and editors, these interviewees had told others' stories and may have felt what Eggers describes above, but as the researcher I am also telling the participants' stories too, so I had to be mindful of the effect of retraumatising them. I shared the Samaritans' confidential 24-hour UK counselling and support phone number as part of the information package sent to each research participant before they were interviewed, and reminded them about the service when I spoke with them during our interview.

Interviewees were also told that while the research did not seek to record economically or commercially sensitive material, there was a risk that such material may be inadvertently revealed. I informed each research participant they could elect to withdraw this material from inclusion in the research at any time, without providing an explanation. The purpose of such research is to gain insight and understanding into the practice employed by the research participants in reporting and sharing information on the crisis events, and so does not pose any risk to their professional or social life.

The potentially sensitive nature of the content researched for this project has been discussed from an ethical point of view, however that discussion dealt mainly with ensuring the safety of the research participants. As a researcher I was also reviewing and analysing the same graphic and traumatic content I interviewed the research participants about. This exposure to 'vicarious trauma' meant I had to be aware of – and manage – the level to which I became entangled in sensitive content as a researcher (Storyful 2016). Dublin-based Storyful reporter Derek Bowler talks about how he has built a tolerance for covering graphic content over many years of working in the media. He considers his work gives meaning to the atrocities happening around the world as a professional journalist. However, there was one story Bowler covered about the Syrian chemical attacks of 2013 that stuck with him and continues to impact him. The film portrays a father "crying and hugging his children and after a couple of seconds both of the children's heads fall backwards, and it's quite obvious at that stage that they are both deceased" (Storyful 2016). As disturbing as this image is for both Bowler in covering it, and anybody who listens to Bowler's retelling of the event afterwards, Bowler goes on to comment "if we don't show that content, if we don't present it in some form to the general public, that's the day we're not journalists. That's the day when we're working to an agenda" (Storyful 2016). To paraphrase Bowler, if I did not undertake this project to uncover as much as I could about the journalistic practice within crisis reporting so I could show an evolution of the craft, I would not be doing my job as a researcher.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methods employed to complete this thesis, namely multiple case studies using semi-structured in-depth interviews, informed by content analysis, to assess the data collected. An argument was made for choosing this research method, which enabled me to conduct a preliminary content analysis of *The Guardian*'s articles initially, and then drill down through various levels of article type and language to ascertain the relevance of social media texts in reporting on those three crisis events. The reasons for choosing this method was discussed, using contemporary examples of scholarship, along with an analysis of how my methodology informed this project.

Theoretical and analytical practice were explained, with my process outlined, along with my argument for a more rigorous approach to content analysis after initial results proved lacking. The completed content analysis informed the research interviews with media professionals and social media users, enabling me to ask specific questions about journalistic practice of social media text usage within crisis reporting and then test responses against those of social media users who had been on the other side of the user-generated content equation during crisis events.

The ethical considerations, including potential of traumatising questions and memories, as well as the researcher's own subjective response to the analysis were outlined in the final part of this chapter. Limitations of my research methods were also examined, with the strengths, weaknesses and implications for each included in the discussion. These

factors included the rigour associated with the content analysis after disregarding initial textual searches. The number of research participants was also discussed in this part, with arguments made around the quality of responses versus the number of interviews conducted.

The research participants' responses and explanations, along with further discussion on the texts collected, is covered in detail in the data analysis and discussion section next. I look at how social media texts were used as research tools and news sources by *Guardian* journalists reporting on the three crisis events studied between 2005 and 2013. Bearing Brennan's (2012) words about providing context during a researcher's interpretative process in mind, the data analysis and discussion section has been divided into two chapters, with the three crisis case studies and data presentation forming the first part of the section and in-depth analysis into crisis reporting through the lenses of speed, verification and ethics in the second chapter. This structure gives a clearer understanding of each crisis event, and *The Guardian*'s news reporting of the event, within the context of the journalistic evolution in crisis reporting.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter presents the data collected from each of the three crisis case studies, along with analysis and discussion. By looking back at crisis reporting in the past two decades, the case studies – London Bombings, England Riots and Lee Rigby's murder – are positioned within the historical context of a changing attitude towards news consumption. Once established within that time parameter, the data for each of the three case studies is divided into an explanation of each event and associated data, with the implications of social media text inclusion in crisis reporting over the eight-year period explored thematically in four sub-sections. The three separate case studies and data for each are contained within the introductory sub-section to give an understanding of the time and situation surrounding *The Guardian*'s practice towards using social media texts as news sources within its crisis reporting. Deeper analysis of each of the three major themes – speed, veracity and ethics – follows in the remaining three sub-sections, answering the research questions within this discussion. It is not enough to just look at how *The Guardian* reported on three crisis events to understand the evolution in journalistic practice when it comes to using social media texts; to truly see how practice has evolved in a digital media environment, it is imperative to look at the developments in the context of the foundational themes on which journalism is based – accuracy, authenticity and

impartiality (Williams, Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen 2011). This multi-layered approach to presenting *The Guardian* crisis reportage data gives both the practical examples and theoretical basis to illustrate the outlet's evolution in social media text use more fully.

To establish the context around professional journalists' attitudes towards amateur involvement in their craft, it is imperative to first look at a significant event that changed the way crises were viewed by both the media and its audience. Following the terrorist attacks on 11 September, 2001, for the first time media consumers made the shift from relying on broadcast media to find out more information online (Gillmor 2004; Salaverria 2005; Rusbridger 2018). Google statistics (2004) show the terms "cnn", "world trade center" and "pentagon" were in the top four Google queries relating to the terrorist attacks for that day. Google analysis (2004) shows, "Among the top 200 queries on September 11, 2001, news-related searches were 60 times greater than the number of news-related searches conducted the previous day" and "More than 80 percent of the top 500 queries conducted on September 11, 2001 were related to the terrorist attacks". Further, Rusbridger explains that this event proved that news no longer had national boundaries, because so many of the visitors to The Guardian website that day were American "…unable to find news from domestic sources with less robust technology. Some of them went onto the talkboards to update the rest of the planet with what they knew" (2018: 72). No longer was the public content to accept the news as it was being shared by broadcast media; this crisis was so consuming that people wanted to know more – and used online sources to find what they needed. This was the beginnings of mass citizen journalism at work, with the public taking its desire for more information

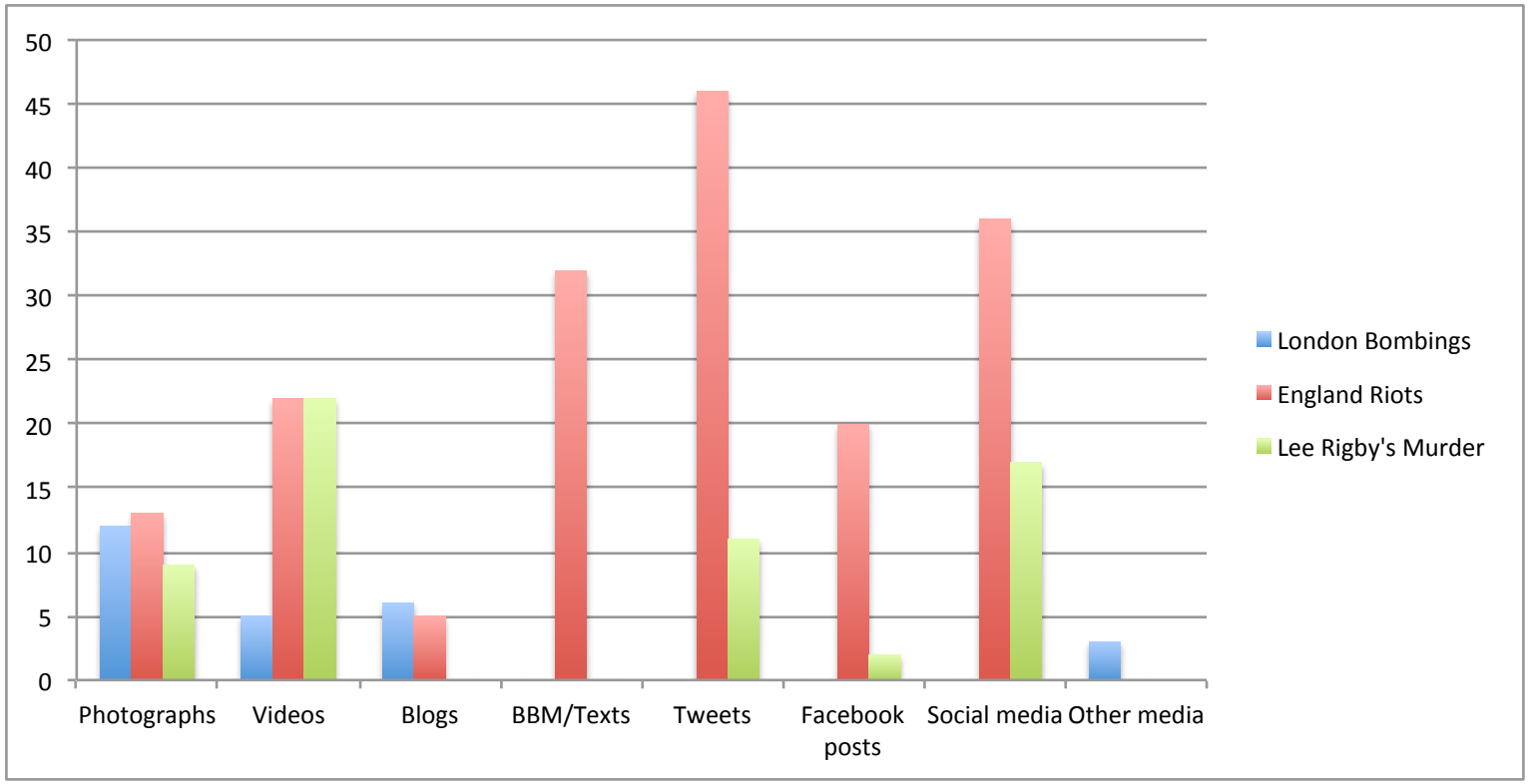
online (Charles and Allan 2019). Gillmor called this the “future of news” (2004: 58). This shift in media consumption patterns, and the importance of citizen-produced imagery and accounts was a strong precursor for what happened during the crisis events that followed the 11 September terrorist attacks.

Just four years after the world witnessed the World Trade Center towers falling (and using the internet for the first time to get more information), eyewitnesses were documenting the London Bombings crisis from within the event itself. These participatory journalists were showing their own networks what they were experiencing from within the crisis, but as the media started soliciting such footage, audiences for what the amateur journalists were publishing grew (BBC 2005). Legacy media was embracing the change in witnessing activity by asking people to submit their texts. More importantly, though, this change in practice meant some of the key moments depicting the initial coverage the bombings were captured by amateurs, as traditional media had no choice but to take advantage of eyewitness locations when they could not access the bombing sites. Amateur reporters took many of the iconic images used in the crisis reporting of the London Bombings in 2005, such as the bombed bus in Tavistock Square and Adam Stacey escaping the tube tunnel. The public has continued to be involved in reporting on crisis events ever since. Other examples of such public participation in crisis reporting include the 2009 plane crash into the Hudson River (Bainbridge, Beasley and Tynan 2011) and England Riots (Ball and Lewis 2011), where social media platforms were monitored for riot hotspots. This participation was repeated in 2013 when Lee Rigby was murdered two years later (Owen and Urquhart 2013) and eyewitnesses

captured the post-attack ‘press conference’ on video – a text which was independently sent to the media afterwards and then broadcast (ITV News 2013). The three UK events studied for this thesis show the longitudinal development of journalistic practice in relation to using social media texts in crisis reporting, specifically how those texts have become an integral part of crisis reporting, with the preferred platforms one of the, if not the, first place checked for information and source material.

Case studies and data presentation

Extending on the initial data collection phase that was discussed at length in the Methodology chapter, a further description is given here to explain the case study time frames. To understand the significance of social media texts and how these texts were used as news sources in *The Guardian*'s reporting during the London Bombings, England Riots and Lee Rigby’s murder, a period of two weeks from the date of the bombings was selected to study. These time periods were: 7 July 2005 – 20 July 2005, 6 August 2011 – 19 August 2011 and 22 May 2013 – 4 June 2013. Each of the three time frames span the newspaper’s reporting in the immediate aftermath of the events, victim and perpetrator identification, public and government reaction and tributes to victims. The research samples cover 12 days of the two-week period (*The Guardian* is not published on Sundays). This part illustrates how journalistic practice has evolved through the use of social media texts in crisis reporting.



Graph 1: Longitudinal comparison between social media texts used in media coverage of each crisis event

London Bombings: where amateurs step up to report

The day after London celebrated its winning bid for the 2012 Olympic Games, a coordinated terrorist attack on the city's public transport system turned jubilation to devastation. Four suicide bombers detonated bombs on three London Underground trains just before 9am (North, 2005) and a double-decker bus in Tavistock Square an hour later, killing 56 people (including the bombers) and injuring more than 770 (BBC, 2005). As emergency services, police and the government worked to discover what had happened and deal with the scale of the crisis above the ground, a revolution was happening below their feet with blast survivors and eyewitnesses taking on the reporting role. For Ferrara (2005), who was working at The Associated Press headquarters in New York at the time of the bombings, the reporting of the attacks in London showed the debate had moved beyond using citizen-produced texts to how they should be used. Comparing the bombings to earlier examples of amateur reporting, like Zapruder, Ferrara saw the difference between those earlier pivotal moments in citizen journalism and what happened in London in 2005 where "the volume of content … now at our fingertips" was unlike that which had been experienced before.

Just shy of four years before the London Bombings, the world had been shocked and captivated in equal amounts as the World Trade Center's Twin Towers fell on 11 September 2001 when Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda launched coordinated attacks on the United States. Audiences watched rolling news coverage as the events unfolded on their television sets, augmented by some video footage contributed by amateurs who happened to be filming in the wrong place at the right time. By 2005 the fact that the bombs detonated between underground rail stations meant the blast locations were difficult for media to access, if not impossible; prompting the need to rely heavily on content sourced from the public. Examples

of this reliance during the bombings can be seen with Stacey's photo (Dennen 2005), Rachel North's eyewitness blog post (North 2005) and the BBC's curated list of amateur videos (BBC 2005). Traditional media's use of amateur material, like Stacey's photo, therefore came about through necessity (David 2010). More than this, however, it recognised the compelling nature – indeed, the *newsworthiness* – of content captured at the coalface of the crisis. A watershed moment for public participation in a breaking news event, the London bombings provided a dramatic backdrop to signal a new way of crisis reporting from that day onwards.

One of the first images to surface from the depths of the city's public transport system was a grainy photo of commuter Adam Stacey, escaping from an underground train tunnel. Taken by fellow passenger Eliot Ward on Stacey's mobile phone, the image showed Stacey holding an item of clothing to his mouth, surrounded by other trapped passengers battling through the smoke-filled Northern Line tunnel near King's Cross station in the aftermath of the blast. At Stacey's request, the image was published by friend and London-based web designer Alfie Dennen on his mobile blog, Alfie's Moblog (2005). It appeared within 15 minutes of the blast, and featured the caption, 'People trapped in the tube', along with a disclaimer stating, 'This work is licenced under a Creative Commons Licence'. The licence meant that anyone could copy, share, alter or republish the photo in any format or medium with attribution to the creator (Creative Commons 2005). According to Dennen, the licensing issue was settled with Stacey via text message: "I texted Adam about it, explaining that it was such an important image, it needed reach, and there was no time to fuss with AP and other syndication agencies" (Dennen cited in O'Neill 2005). True to Dennen's predictions, the photo was picked up and reproduced by news media outlets around the UK, and the world, within hours of the attacks; marking the London bombings as a tipping point in both the ways in which publics participate in – and contribute to – the newsgathering process and audiences

experience news (Allan 2015; Cook and Dickinson 2014: 205-206). *Guardian* journalist Shiv Malik credits the photo of Adam Stacey as a significant moment in the evolution of crisis reporting. It is in this instance that shows public participation in crisis reporting both adds to traditional media coverage of such events and positions the public as an important participant in the creation of news reportage. Malik says:

> A seminal moment was on July 7th when we get those shots [of Stacey in] a smoke-filled [train] tunnel. You would have never got that unless someone was on the scene; a journalist had to be on the scene; someone with a camera had to be on the scene. And people – ordinary citizens – instead of fleeing for their lives, remarkably, picked up their phones and started taking photos. (Malik 2016)

While this public participation in a news event is now commonplace, in 2005 it was still novel. With this novelty came an ever-shifting relationship between journalist and the public as consumer and as creator; one that was negotiated and has had lasting impact on future news reporting. The collaborative reporting that has progressively evolved along with the introduction of new technologies, like the smartphone and social media, fosters a new relationship between journalists and their audience. This relationship is a partnership that results in more expansive, co-created news coverage. Almost unprecedented in 2005, this partnership was cemented when amateur content was not only considered for use, but deemed more newsworthy than that created by professionals outside the bombings sites. In exploring the inclusion of participatory journalists' social media content into traditional news reporting and the transition to a more collaborative form of mediated representation, the London bombings reflects a seminal event for journalism. This 2005 event brought the digital element into crisis reporting via participatory journalists' social media texts, setting a collaborative model for crisis reporting going forward.

A prime example of this media convergence was Alfie Dennen's moblog coverage of the

London bombings, which paved the way for the more participatory journalistic model for events that came afterwards. In response to the overwhelming reaction he received to Stacey's photo on his moblog, Dennen set up a dedicated website called We're Not Afraid[9] (although the site is no longer operational) in defiance of the terrorists who had attacked his city. Thousands of people from around the world shared images on the website, creating another example of audience participation, as well as a visual archive of public sentiment at the time post bombings.

The "state of affairs", as Lorenzo-Dus and Bryan (2011: 36-37) describe the circumstances that prompted news organisations to solicit and use pictures taken by witnesses during the bombings – such as the one that emerged from the collaboration between Stacey, Ward and Dennen – "as substitutes for professional coverage" (Lorenzo-Dus and Bryan 2011: 36-37). Including specific spaces within reporting on the London bombings for first-hand accounts and inviting comments from eyewitnesses made traditional outlets' crisis reporting for this event more open. This important image turned Dennen and his collaborators into three of the many participatory journalists who shared their knowledge and experience of what was happening at the centre of the attacks, where traditional media's access was limited. The Dennen example, within the bombings case study, is an exemplar of the convergence of accidental and professional journalism that became a hallmark of the London bombings. The London bombings reporting by those at the scene is a key example of accidental journalism, as was Zapruder's assassination film and Athar's raid tweet, showing the concept is not new, but the volume of accidental texts about the bombings in varying formats and from multiple sources is what makes that crisis an important starting point for participatory crisis reporting. The London bombings case study sets the scene to show an evolution in journalistic practice

[9] werenotafraid.com

in using social media texts to report on breaking news events. This event became a flashpoint for participatory journalism and the inclusion of social media in crisis reporting. As the collaboration between traditional news media and participatory journalists continues to develop beyond the 2005 bombings event, the role of professional and citizen journalists continues to evolve.

The scene for the London bombings has now been set, with the role of participatory journalists and the media response to the influx of contributed content explained. Data collected from *The Guardian*'s reporting in the fortnight after the event, coupled with insights gleaned via research interviews, shows the role social media played during this crisis. The London bombings sample was the smallest of the three included in this project, indicating social media was not a prominent player within media reporting of crisis events yet. However, the texts that were included – namely images and videos taken by bombings victims and eyewitnesses on mobile phones, as well as *The Guardian* journalists quoting personal blog posts in their reporting – shows the practice of co-opting content had already started. This crisis was a watershed event for crisis reporting using content sourced from the public, even if the scale was not as widespread as later events. The bombings research sample captured 16 articles with elements of user-generated content and social media texts (see Table 2 in Appendix 1).

None of the articles published by *The Guardian* on the day of the bombings in the print newspaper archives studied for this project included contributed content relating to the bombings. Data collected for the following day showed a small number of articles quoting text from emails written by bombings eyewitnesses and the people on the London trains and bus. However, emails are not included within the scope of this project as they are outside the

definition of the contributed material investigated here, as outlined in the introduction above (see Belair-Gagnon 2013: 235). It should be noted that the front page of *The Guardian* on 8 July 2005 – the day after the London Bombings – featured a full-page contributed photo of, "the ripped open double-decker bus" (Anon 2005), under the splash headline "London's day of terror". This front page did not appear in the research sample results, however, because the NewsBank search was for news articles, rather than photographs.

It was actually not until two days after the bombings (9 July) that *The Guardian* published print articles using texts contributed by the public. A spike in the number of articles that mentioned or included content contributed by amateur journalists occurred on 11 July, with seven of the 16 articles included in the bombings research sample published on that day. Interestingly, most of the articles published on 11 July included in this sample were more focused on what *The Guardian* termed a "shift in the balance of media power", referring to the fact that much of the initial reporting had been done by amateurs, rather than reporting on the crisis event itself (Day 2005). Five of the seven articles from *The Guardian*'s print archives for 11 July illustrated the involvement of participatory journalists in reporting on the London bombings. Two of those articles – one by Owen Gibson entitled "Blogs" and another by James Silver called "Press" (in *The Guardian*, 2005) – that used contributed content as a news source on 11 July quoted blog posts written by media professionals outside *The Guardian*. One was penned by *The Daily Mail* journalist Melanie Phillips, and the second came from the site administrator of the online community LiveJournal. Data from 11 July shows this was the day *The Guardian* included the most publicly contributed content in its crisis reporting for the bombings. Despite this being a peak day in *The Guardian*'s use of contributed content, the majority of those articles concentrated on how other traditional media outlets had incorporated participatory journalism into their reporting.

Moving from the frequency of amateur content in *The Guardian*'s reporting to the types of user-generated texts used in that reporting (see Graph 1 above), the data shows contributed photographs were used or mentioned more than any other text type. Of the 16 articles where contributed content was a factor, photographic texts were mentioned or used in 12 of those, followed by quoted blog posts (n=6), videos (n=5) and other media (n=3), such as virtual communities and podcasts. Reaffirming the importance of these amateur images to the newspaper, Scott (2005) in an article for *The Guardian* confirmed: "Many of the defining images of the attacks were not taken by an army of professional press photographers in London. Instead, they were grainy, ill-composed and immediate, captured by people caught up in the bombings on their mobile phones" (see also Allan 2007). Analysis of *The Guardian*'s reporting of the London bombings shows that while there were a small number of articles that featured user-generated and social media content, these contributed texts were vital in the traditional journalistic reporting on the London bombings story, and they contributed to a commentary on their significance to changes within the broader media industry.

At the time of the London bombings Neil McIntosh was the Guardian Unlimited assistant editor (and afterwards became the BBC Online managing editor). McIntosh says initial reports about the bombings came through very conventional means, such as the Press Association wire and London Underground communications, as well as *Guardian* staff arriving at the newspaper's offices and commenting that something horrible had transpired based on their difficulties in getting to work that day. As any journalist would in the same situation, they wanted to find out more. The *Guardian*'s newsroom staff turned to broadcast media for verification of an event. McIntosh explains:

> Confirmation for us in the newsroom came when Sky News had Trafalgar Square on when the bus bomb went off. An eyewitness called in from a hotel lobby in Trafalgar Square, and we had Sky on at the office, and that provided a confirmation for us that something dreadful had happened. (2016)

Once the terrorist attacks in the city's transport system had been confirmed, the *Guardian*'s journalists started working on what was obviously going to be the day's biggest story. By this time the roads had become difficult to navigate due to high volumes of traffic, so journalists were sent out on foot and bicycle. McIntosh says, "One reporter arrived [in the newsroom] and was immediately sent back out on a bicycle because there was no [other] way of finding out [what had happened]". He went on to comment that, " It feels like the difference between carrier pigeons and the telegraph… today that call might have come more quickly because we would have much more information coming from Twitter and Instagram" (McIntosh, N 2016, Pers. comm., 23 May). Indeed, as McIntosh alludes, the developments that occurred in journalism – and society in general – between 2005 and when the research interview was conducted in 2016 show just how much more reliant our society has become on smartphones and social media for information. These technological devices have become intimately intertwined in our lives (Goggin 2006; Hjorth, Burgess and Richardson 2012). As Goggin explains, "…the cell phone has become much more than a device for voice calls – it has become a central cultural technology in its own right" (2006: 2). Specifically, honing in on the iPhone as a key example of smartphone technology, Hjorth, Burgess and Richardson found "…it marks a historical conjuncture in which notions about identity, individualism, lifestyle, and sociality – and their relationship to technology and media practice…" (2012: 1). The almost instant nature of electronic texts that confirmed more recent crisis events, like the Boston bombings and Lee Rigby's murder, highlight the difference a decade of technological advances and the public's involvement in such stories had made.

Harnessing the medium that was best able to cope with the iterative nature of crisis reporting at the time, *The Guardian* journalists started live-blogging the breaking story as soon as they suspected the bombings were a terrorist attack. As the story developed, contributions from members of the public in the form of emails, personal anecdotes and images of people escaping through the underground tunnels were reviewed and published alongside the facts about that attack that journalists were able to confirm. This was iterative journalism in practice. "There [were] rumours of there being a follow-up explosion at Trafalgar Square. There was no explosion at Trafalgar Square," McIntosh explains, saying that the ethos of live-blogging at that time was, "we've got to get that out there and see if our audience can help us confirm what's going on. We just reported those [contributions] saying we've got unconfirmed rumours, can anyone confirm?" (McIntosh N 2016, Pers. comm., 23 May). *The Guardian* published an email address for people to respond with information. As soon as anything was confirmed the live-blog was updated with a post verifying the facts, or dismissing them, for example: "Update: this wasn't a thing at all and that's not what happened" (McIntosh N 2016, Pers. comm., 23 May). As McIntosh explains, *The Guardian* took an open approach when it came to rolling reports of the bombings: "We felt that was a transparent and honest way of dealing with an unfolding situation... the main thing was we provided a more complete picture, if occasionally a less accurate picture" (McIntosh N 2016, Pers. comm., 23 May). In addition to the breaking news blog, a second live stream was set up dedicated to people's messages of condolence once it became clear how big the crisis event was. This decision separated the developing facts from the messages of support, giving readers a clear distinction between the two.

England Riots: where social media is both news source and reporting tool

Just two months after the UK's Labour Party won a third consecutive term in office riots broke out across England. The England Riots began on 6 August 2011, in response to the police shooting and killing of 29-year-old Mark Duggan in Tottenham on 4 August. The north London shooting of Duggan was cited as the spark that triggered the unrest, with racial tensions fuelling growing hostility towards the British police force over the summer (Lewis et al 2011). A peaceful crowd, including members of Duggan's family, gathered outside the Tottenham police station on the afternoon of 6 August demanding to know what happened as they had not received an official version of the shooting event. After several hours with little response from the police, the crowd became restless and the situation grew heated, with riots breaking out in pockets around London. Initially police vehicles and a double decker bus were set alight, but within hours the violence escalated. Over the following four days rioters started fires, looted and destroyed homes and businesses in London and around England (Wasik 2012). The riots resulted in five deaths, injuries to 16 members of the public, almost 200 police officers and five police dogs and millions of pounds worth of damage (Wasik 2012). By 11 August police had made more than 3000 arrests, resulting in more than 1000 people being charged with criminal acts.

As the pockets of civil unrest spread around England, social media played the role of key news and information source, with the public utilising social media platforms Twitter and Facebook and encrypted messaging service BlackBerry Messenger (BBM), to spread the word about the riots. The predominant communication tool used during the riots was BBM, with some social media platforms, namely Twitter, used to plan riots and share targeted businesses and locations. BBM allows users to send messages instantly, make voice calls and

share images, in a similar way to social platform Facebook Messenger, however using BBM's group chat facility during the riots increased the social nature of the messages because the same message could be sent to many at once. BBM was used in a similar way during the Occupy Nigeria protests to both connect with and spread information about the protests, after users were left feeling they had been marginalised by mainstream media (Hari 2014). As a communication method, social media allows users to share views and updates without having to go through the gatekeeping and verification process that traditional media observes. Like the London Bombings reportage six years before the riots, some of the most important material used in traditional media coverage about this crisis came from within the riots themselves. While there were professional journalists reporting from various riotous scenes, such as Paul Lewis from *The Guardian*, much of the content came from participatory journalists reporting what they could see happening around them.

Social media was certainly a medium for sharing information during the England Riots – whether that be the locations of the riots themselves, photographs and videos from amateur reporters or even updates on the unfolding story from traditional journalists. However, these connected platforms were also more than simply a place to share information during the riots. The impact of social media on the crisis reporting that happened during the England Riots shows it was a valuable tool that traditional journalists used as an alert service, news source, reporting medium and a community facilitator. Social media was one of the primary publishing platforms during the riots, which proved to be both an opportunity and threat for crisis reporting during the event. As Corfield says, "It effectively makes your professional reporters' life a bit easier when everybody else is actively broadcasting what's going on around them" (Corfield, G 2016, Pers. comm., 15 March). This chapter shows how social media texts became more relevant as a journalistic tool for crisis reporting in the six years

between the London Bombings in 2005 and England Riots in 2011. Interestingly, what had not changed in the time span between these two crisis events was the speed at which amateur content became part of traditional media's reporting of the riots. Like Alfie Dennen's Moblog post showing Adam Stacey escaping the tube tunnel appearing in media stories about the bombings around the world within hours, social media texts about the riots were alerting professional journalists about where they should go to find the breaking story.

Significantly, Twitter played a starring role during the riots, but not for the same reasons as BlackBerry Messenger. While the public platform Twitter became a news alert, source, publishing tool, rumour debunker and central space from which to organise riot clean ups, the more private and encrypted BBM was predominantly used by rioters to organise the attacks on various venues around England. The archival data gleaned from *The Guardian*'s reporting in the two weeks after the riots and interviews with professional journalists and social media users confirmed the roles these two social platforms played during the events. In addition to the part social media played as the place where citizens could publish their own riot-related content, it also became a saviour for the journalists who were reporting from the front line of the violent attacks. Not considering it safe to openly record the rioters, some professional journalists, like the *Guardian*'s Lewis, turned to Twitter to report on the crisis, using the same tools as their amateur counterparts. This meant they could blend in with the riot crowds and report from the scene without drawing attention to themselves, while also acting on the journalistic imperative to report what was happening in front of them.

Twitter, Instagram and many citizen reporting sites had been launched in the years between the London Bombings and the England Riots. These platforms made it easier for the public to share the content captured of crises, but this also meant traditional media outlets had

additional sources to scan and verify before being able to use the information sourced from these social networks and websites. The England Riots case also highlights the differences between the verification methods used by participatory journalists and professional journalists, with the former often publishing first because their checks were not as in depth.

The England Riots provided an ideal opportunity in which to test the value of social media when it comes to crisis reporting, as well as assess the influence of such technology on the quality of the end journalistic product. The riots themselves unfolded over five days in many different locations throughout England, allowing ample opportunity for thousands of social media users to share various points of view and content online. This mass posting of photos, videos and updates on social media and citizen journalism platforms gave journalists reporting on the riots access to content and insights to that they may not have seen otherwise. Conversely, while social media was not the cause of the England Riots, many commentators blamed the platforms for aggravating the situation. Allan explains the negative perceptions of social media during the riots:

> Social networking sites exacerbated matters, some press accounts alleged, with 'trouble-makers on Twitter' relaying inflammatory claims and images certain to incite a 'frenzy' of violence… So-called 'copy cat riots', as they were promptly labeled in other reports, spread to further districts of London and, soon after, to other towns and cities across England, including Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester and Liverpool. (2013: 138)

A crisis that has since been immortalised in books, songs and a theatrical performance, the 2011 event is one of three crises used to understand the significance of social media texts in traditional newspaper reporting.

The media landscape changed between 2005 and 2011, with data collected on the England Riots showing a social media-savvy amateur news crew on hand to help report as needed.

Some of the research interviewees used social media texts in their crisis reporting, while others used more traditional journalistic methods when it came to sourcing material for their stories. However, all acknowledged the important role social media played for media coverage of the England Riots. The six-year gap between the first crisis studied, London Bombings, and the riots, shows user-generated content (UGC) had become a much bigger component of journalistic practice when it came to crisis reporting during the latter event. Data analysis of this event shows Twitter, BlackBerry Messenger and unspecified social media topped the lists of texts (see Table 5 in Appendix 2). Within the 112 articles published by *The Guardian* where UGC was a factor in the two weeks after the riots, social media texts appeared 174 times. Breaking this down further, Twitter texts were used or mentioned in 46 of the articles, which accounts for just over a quarter of the total text mentions. Unspecified social media texts (the terms "social networks" and "social media" are included in this count) follow Twitter (n=36), then BlackBerry Messenger (n=32), video (n=22), Facebook (n=20), photographs (n=13) and blogs (n=5).

Looking further at the data to explain how social media texts were used in *The Guardian*'s riot reporting, the greatest number of UGC texts included in news articles happened on Wednesday, 10 August 2011. On this day, which was four days after the first riot in Tottenham, 24 *Guardian* articles used or mentioned amateur content. These articles include commentators discussing the impact of social media during the riots, a YouTube video of an injured boy being mugged, collections of tweets by celebrities in response to the riots and riot clean-up activities, which were organised via Twitter and Facebook. The preceding day (9 August) had the next highest incidence of UGC mentions (n=18), followed by 13 August (n=16), showing the highest number of articles featuring social media texts were published in the first week after the England Riots. This data relates directly to further insights from

research interviewees later in this chapter, showing that social media – specifically Twitter and BlackBerry Messenger – played a significant role in traditional reporting of the England Riots.

Lee Rigby's murder: event and aftermath captured and published by public

Lee Rigby's death in May 2013, only weeks after the Boston Marathon bombings in April, occurred in the midst of an increasing terrorism threat around the world. This attack in Woolwich, London, was one of 10,000 terrorist attacks globally in 2013, which represented an increase of 44 per cent on the previous year (Cheung 2014). Rigby, a 25-year-old soldier stationed in the barracks in the south-east London district Woolwich, was killed on 22 May 2013 in retaliation to the British military's involvement in the war in Afghanistan (Allan 2014). Rigby's attackers, Michael Adebolajo, 28, and Michael Adebowale, 22, knocked the soldier down with their car as he was walking along Wellington Street, Woolwich, back to his barracks around 2.20pm. As the soldier lay injured on the road the pair hacked him to death with knives before a street full of stunned witnesses, some of whom captured the attack in video and photos on their mobile phones (Pettifor and Lines 2013).

Many factors combine to make this event stand out when studying the role of social media texts in crisis reporting: this story broke on social media, the attackers demanded to be filmed and held an impromptu press conference to explain their actions, and the volume of social media texts posted to a number of platforms after the attacks. Within hours of Rigby's murder these texts were co-opted by traditional media outlets reporting on the terrorist attack. Additionally, the public's involvement in the crisis through recording the attack, publishing those recordings and sharing police movements as they searched the attacker's homes

introduces legal questions to the case. Ethics surrounding the decision by legacy media outlets to republish user-generated content and texts of such a graphic nature was also a factor at play during this crisis. An analysis of *The Guardian*'s newspaper reporting and journalistic insights into the Rigby story are used to discuss how each factor affected this case in the next part.

A heightened level of interactivity was prevalent on social media platforms and traditional media coverage of Lee Rigby's murder in 2013. The archival analysis of *The Guardian*'s newspaper articles conducted for this thesis shows social media texts featured in traditional reporting of this crisis almost every day during the two weeks analysed. These texts were created and shared by those who witnessed the attack in Woolwich and, afterwards, shared further by those within their networks, and onwards, via the media and social media users. The story itself broke on Twitter, and social media was where the story stayed initially as traditional media outlets caught up. Social media users watched and reacted to Adebolajo's press conference where he explained why he and Adebowale murdered Rigby before it was broadcast on ITV, although the televisual coverage is what helped extend the story's reach around the world.

The legality of recording a crime, sharing that recording to an unlimited audience and also revealing details of police operations, such as the movements of officers conducting searches, raised ethical issues during the Rigby murder crisis. Additionally, the ethical considerations professional journalists and editors must undertake when reporting on a horrific event like a brutal murder is raised here. What is suitable to share, and how much, is a topic that has been debated at length throughout decades of crisis reporting (see, for example, the withholding of a frame of Zapruder's film depicting Kennedy's assassination). However, it was interesting to

note that even though footage of Rigby's murder was already available online, there were still a significant number of complaints after the video of the attack was broadcast on ITV's news bulletins. Ofcom received around 700 complaints after the video depicting a "bloody-handed man" was broadcast at 6.12pm, and then a further 150 complaints after it was rebroadcast on ITN's and BBC1's 10pm news bulletins (Winston 2013: 47).

The Rigby story broke on Twitter, alerting traditional media outlets to the crisis and then leading journalists to the scene of the attack and subsequent press conference, which was captured by eyewitnesses on their mobile phones and then shared with their social networks and media. Professional journalists interviewed for this thesis confirm the importance of social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, in collecting material for and reporting on this particular case study. Social media was a factor in professional reporting of Rigby's murder from the initial tweets that alerted journalists to the attack, through to the user-generated videos and photos that were re-published by multiple media outlets. These social networks were also vital as an information tool for journalists as they tracked down details about the attackers' lives. Social media texts were a major factor in the reporting of the terrorist attack where Lee Rigby was killed, to the point that the attack, the explanatory press conference and the police response afterwards were all recorded, broadcast and mediated online before traditional journalists had even spoken with eyewitnesses. The involvement of social media during the Rigby murder crisis event shows has much this technology has compressed the timeline of a breaking news story. Instead of many hours, the story was reported within minutes.

In the two years between the England Riots in 2011 and Rigby's death in 2013, social media's purpose as a news source for journalists and the public alike took on greater

capacity. The relevance of such digital texts has been confirmed as a vital tool in crisis reporting, as shown via *The Guardian*'s newspaper articles in the fortnight from the day of attack, with that data backed up by journalist interview responses. In the hours after Rigby's murder, *The Guardian* published six articles referencing (in order of prevalence) video, photo and tweet texts (see Table 6 in Appendix 2). In a total of 39 articles published by *The Guardian* in that 14-day period, social media texts were referenced or mentioned in 30. Breaking this down into specific texts, the terms social media appeared in 17 articles, followed by tweets (n=11) and Facebook posts (n=2). The two remaining texts – video and photo – were used or mentioned in 22 and nine articles, respectively. These figures indicate there were a number of articles where more than one term was used. It is evident from looking at these figures that social media texts were used or mentioned as key news sources in articles about Rigby's attack.

Looking more specifically at the texts outlined above and where they were used in *The Guardian*'s newspaper articles, social media texts (including the general "social media" term, as well as "tweet" and "Facebook") appeared in articles published on all but one day where such texts were included. These references include quoting eyewitness Boya Dee's tweets: "'Oh my God!!! The way the Feds took them out!!! It was female police officer she come out the whip and just started busssin shots... right next to a primary school'" (Laville et al 2013) on 23 May; to discussing eyewitness Dee's pre-attack "timeline of mundane tweets" (Bell 2013) the following day; and quoting Scotland Yard deputy assistant commissioner Stuart Osborne saying police were combing social media platforms for information: "'We are pursuing a significant amount of CCTV, social media, forensic and intelligence opportunities and have active lines of inquiry'" (Jones et al 2013) on 27 May. Additionally, Quinn (2013) writes about how the English Defence League (EDL) guides demonstrators to a protest in

London via “messages posted on Twitter” on 28 May and Dee (2013) mentions his "vivid commentary on Twitter" when writing about witnessing Rigby's attack on 29 May.

By 2013 social media – in particular Twitter – has become an important tool within newsrooms. This is evidenced by *Guardian* journalist Shiv Malik’s comment in reference to Rigby’s death that “social media was the reason we were alerted to this story” (Malik, S 2016, Pers. comm., 25 March). News of Lee Rigby’s death broke on Twitter, in the same way many major stories had broken in the years between the two crisis events that bookend this project. Janis Krums’ tweet and Twitpic photo announcing a plane had crashed on the Hudson River (Krums 2009), Sohaib Athar’s tweet about the helicopter above Abbottabad that signalled the operation resulting in Osama Bin Laden’s death (Athar 2011) and the Boston Marathon bombings (Qu 2013) are all examples of stories broken on Twitter by citizens surprised at what was happening in front of them. As they have come to understand how to use social media as a news gathering tool, journalists started to use the platforms as somewhere to find stories, sources and information. For the Rigby story, eyewitness turned citizen reporter rapper, Boya Dee (@BOYADEE) was shopping when he saw the attack and started live-tweeting the events. The tweet that alerted thousands of others to this breaking story was: “Ohhhhh myyyy God!!!! I just see a man with his head chopped off right in front of my eyes!” (Allan 2014; Innes et al 2016). It was this tweet that alerted *The Guardian* to Rigby’s attack, as Quinn explains: “I think most people heard about Lee Rigby’s death with Twitter and, in particular, a Twitter account called @BOYADEE” (Quinn, B 2016, Pers. comm., 25 February). Dee’s tweets, which have since been deleted but can be read along with social media texts from additional eyewitnesses and other media outlets in Owen and Urquhart's article (2013), were key texts for this crisis (also Innes et al 2016). Indeed, "By the end of May 22, @boyadee's tweets had been retweeted nearly 11,000 times and the content of

his messages had featured in close to 34,000 other messages," Innes et al says (2014: 18). In addition, Dee's tweets were online before traditional media outlets had published anything on Rigby's attack (Quinn 2016; Innes et al 2014: 18).

The almost 11,000 retweets of Dee's updates on Twitter were watched by journalists working on *The Guardian* news desk that May 2013 afternoon. As incredible as the event sounded, the sheer volume of activity about the attack on Twitter indicated this was a story that must be followed up in person. As Malik explains:

> We didn't believe social media until we could verify it ourselves… If someone says, 'Someone's just been chopping people's heads off in Woolwich,' you're not going to take that to be true until you can verify that yourself, on the ground, because it's too much of an insane thing to believe. (2016)

Immediately following Rigby's death, Adebolajo approached a witness and demanded to be filmed. Speed and social media were both factors when it came to the circulation of the Adebolajo press conference footage, with Dee's tweets being shared before media reports were published. However, the way information about the attack and Rigby's attackers was presented and confirmed was also an important factor to consider. The sheer volume of Dee's tweets and images depicting men with blood-soaked hands and meat cleavers had "a profound impact upon how the incident was subsequently reported" (Innes et al 2016: 1564), because it pointed journalists to a story they must follow. The authors continued: "the tweeter of the messages [Dee] was contacted directly via Twitter by journalists within an hour, offering him money for pictures and rights to his tweets" (Innes et al 2016: 1564). Using Dee's tweets and other information he and his colleagues had gleaned from Twitter as a starting point, Malik pieced together the details of Rigby's attack. Malik says:

> The story emerges so much faster because it's just captured in real time… We know that there are two perpetrators. We know roughly what happened. We know that this guy's got blood on

> his hands and he's holding a meat cleaver. We know when it happened. We know probably who the victim is at that point. These are things that would have taken a day or two [to discover] in the past and they were happening within a few hours. Within five or six hours we had a comprehensive picture, which has stood this test of time in terms of its ability to deliver the facts, or the pertinent ones. (2016)

Once the attack was corroborated Malik was sent to the Woolwich street where the attack happened to investigate. He says:

> By the time I arrived at the scene, it was quite clear that the authorities had taken this as a terrorist event. And then I went around the scene and talked to people to see if they'd been able to capture any footage themselves, because that obviously became the pressing thing. (Malik 2016)

Despite being on the scene within 20 minutes of the attack, Malik was not the one to verify what had taken place in Woolwich. While speaking with witnesses about what had happened, the news desk called Malik to say *The Guardian* had received a copy of the video taken immediately after the attack and that was the verification needed. He says, "that footage was already circulating probably within an hour of my arrival. And at that point, from my perspective, it was all finished, wrapped up and done" (Malik, S 2016, Pers. comm., 25 March). Dee also tweeted about Adebolajo and Adebowale charging at the police when the officers arrived, which resulted in both attackers being shot (Quinn, B 2016, Pers. comm., 25 February; Allan 2014). Dee was courted by media outlets to comment on Rigby's attack and later acted as a central witness because he had live-tweeted the events (Malik, S 2016, Pers. comm., 25 March). Other witnesses recorded Adebolajo and Adebowale defending their actions and speaking with concerned members of the public after the attack (ITV News 2013; Pettifor and Lines 2013; DaheflersPuppets 2013) on video and in photos. These user-generated images, videos and first-hand accounts were then used by traditional media outlets, like ITV News, to tell the Rigby murder story.

Articles about Rigby's murder that used or mentioned video texts were published on seven out of 10 days covered in this research sample. The video depicting Adebolajo holding a press conference, which was filmed by an eyewitness and then broadcast by ITV, is frequently mentioned in articles by *Guardian* journalists (including Laville et al 2013; Bell 2013; Dodd 2013) analysed for this project. Dodd writes that "[Rigby's] killing sparked intense media coverage, in part because of videos taken by witnesses on mobile phone cameras" (2013), showing the significance of user-generated video content and its broadcast in breaking news events. In contrast with the previous two cases investigated, photo texts took a back seat to video texts in the Rigby case. Photos were only used in three days of Rigby reportage, with these texts only included in the first five days of reporting on the terrorist attack. Social media texts were used and/or mentioned more often and more consistently by crisis reporters than any other text type in this two-week period studied for the Rigby case, showing social media texts had become a significant news source for crisis reporting by 2013. This finding was also backed up with anecdotal insights gleaned from the research interviews with *The Guardian* journalists who covered the Rigby crisis.

Tracing the evolution of social media text use within crisis reporting over an eight-year time frame at *The Guardian*, this thesis observes and explains the changing journalistic practice around such technology. From scanning blogs and photo sharing website Flickr for content, through to tracking trending hashtags for breaking stories, putting calls out for content and reporting via tweet, professional journalists have evolved with social media platforms. Studying this evolution through the lens of crisis reporting at one outlet gives a unique insight into the changes within journalism, and how the public has come to be intrinsically involved. The key themes of speed, verification and ethics, and how these factors relate to each crisis event, are discussed within each case study to provide an understanding of how social media

users became involved in these crises as amateur journalists, and what part they played in reporting each event.

CHAPTER FIVE: EXPLORING FACTORS OF SPEED, VERACITY AND ETHICS

The focus of this thesis is on social media texts used in *The Guardian*'s crisis reporting, which naturally includes Facebook and Twitter as they have been the platforms most widely used by participatory journalists. However, despite Facebook being in its infancy at the time of the London bombings (Phillips 2007; Bruns 2018) and Twitter's non-existence then, it is important to note that participatory journalism had been practiced via other platforms, with Flickr and blogs commonly used to share amateur reports. By 2005, journalism had been undergoing "a quiet revolution" (Lasica 2003), whether it knew it or not. This evolution was shaping as bloggers shared eyewitness accounts from peace demonstrations, conferences and concerts (Lasica 2003) and the internet gossip website Drudge Report broke the news about Monica Lewinsky's affair with President Bill Clinton (DrudgeReportArchives 2019). Such online content, from different sources, has developed as a way of telling of the story, and sharing it, in a wider fashion.

Once news had broken of the first terrorist attack by plane on 11 September, 2001, the world watched on in horror as the second plane hit, and then waited in stunned anticipation as the World Trade Center towers come crashing down in front of our eyes. Millions witnessed this scene on their televisions at home or work, the images of the building crumbling into huge plumes of smoke forever imprinted on their mind. This 2001 crisis was predominantly a live

television and radio event with some content contributed by amateurs (Gillmor 2004). While online newspapers covered the September 11 attacks, and many readers used this digital medium to post comments about the event and read others' responses. The internet was not the primary medium used to find out what had happened (Rainie 2001). Despite the internet being considered a supplementary tool during this crisis event, September 11 was arguably the first major international event that was broken, researched and subsequently analysed online, albeit playing a minor role to legacy media when it came to disseminating the story (Gillmor 2004; Salaverria 2005). In addition to the traditional media coverage of the terrorist attacks, further information could be gleaned from the general public posting what they saw and how they felt via emails, mailing lists, chat groups and early blogs, or personal Web journals. Social media, and the public's involvement in crisis events, has changed crisis reporting from a breaking story with a handful of journalistic players to be more like a Hollywood blockbuster with a full cast of media leads, witnesses – and cheaper (Outing 2005) – news-savvy amateurs playing supporting roles, along with a multitude of people behind the scenes researching leads, checking facts, processing content and spreading the story.

Traditional media's use of citizen-produced photographs and film is, in fact, not a new phenomenon post London Bombings. Indeed, the aforementioned Abraham Zapruder recording of the President John F. Kennedy assassination and George Holliday's video footage of Rodney King' assault, have both been credited with playing a vital role in the rise of accidental and citizen journalism (Allan 2013). In between the first and second crisis events studied as part of this project, an aeroplane landed on New York's Hudson River and the event was captured by a ferry passenger, who then shared the stunning scene on Twitter, which contributed to the speed of rescue efforts. *The Guardian* journalist Shiv Malik sees this

incident as a key moment in the evolution of crisis reporting:

> It was quite a seminal moment where people realised, 'Hang on, you can take a photo of the most remarkable thing – a plane in a river with people coming out of it'. Certainly from that point, we've become far more adept at understanding how these things work and understand what's true and what's not. (2016)

Witnessing is, as Allan suggests, "the lynchpin of good reporting" (2013), and for each of the three crises studied – London Bombings, England Riots and Lee Rigby's murder – the initial mediated elements broadcast all came from amateurs at the scene (see also Zelizer 2007). While Zapruder and Holliday's contributions in 1963 and 1991, respectively, were pivotal in the development of participatory journalism, the difference between those occasions and the three crises between 2005 and 2013 studied within this thesis is the amount and type of user-generated content now available to traditional media outlets once such a story breaks.

This thesis shows how social media texts were integrated into news reporting, however since the end of the three case studies researched a number of subsequent crisis events, have "similarly figured in appraisals of the changing nature of the relationship between professional journalism and its amateur, citizen-led alternatives" (Allan 2013: 94). These include the Mumbai terrorist attacks in 2008, England riots in 2011, Boston bombings in 2013, Sydney Siege in 2014, Paris terror attacks in 2015, New York City truck attack in 2017, Bourke Street attack in Melbourne in 2018 and George Floyd's murder earlier this year. Additionally, Bouvier's (2019) analysis of tweets and news coverage generated by two women travelling from Ireland to the United Kingdom for an abortion explains this evolution takes the form of "…breaking stories by using citizen journalist reports on Twitter, or having journalists scouring local community networks on social media for locally trending story ideas" (2019: 214). Johnston confirms how much social media texts have now become part of

news reporting by saying, "[t]he adoption of UGC into news coverage is now commonplace, but most frequently happens when there is no other way to tell the story" (2016: 2). Beyond tapping into what is buzzing within a community for news leads, social media texts can be the instigator for the kernel of an idea to be fleshed out or they can provide the complete foundation for an entire story, with professional journalists going back over the content to fill the voids between such texts with interviews and analysis.

By virtue of circumstance, the London bombings epitomised these very conditions. The unexpected nature of the attacks in the middle of a Thursday morning rush hour meant that "broadcasters were not on the scene to obtain immediate footage of the blasts, and even following news of the explosions, the three crime scenes remained out of bounds" (Lorenzo-Dus and Bryan 2011: 36). Further to this, Anden-Papadopoulos and Pantti describe how the public took up the London bombings story:

> …the images that defined the media coverage of the terrorist bombings came from ordinary Londoners caught in the attacks. Commuters trapped underground used their camera phones to capture the perspective of people making their way out of smoke and soot-filled carriages, while other citizen footage documented the rescue efforts that took place above the ground. (2011: 14)

Stephen Bates was one of *The Guardian*'s journalists tasked with reporting on the London bombings. He undertook this role with a notebook as he considers himself an "old-school journalist", however Bates says social media was a definitive factor in the reporting of the event. He says mobile footage of passengers being led away from the Aldgate explosion stuck in his mind:

> I think it was possibly one of the earliest incidents which was depicted in that way, with ancillary help from members of the pubic in producing graphic pictorial evidence as opposed to telling journalists what they saw afterwards. In other words, journalists didn't have any direct input into that. It was spontaneously filmed and released. (Bates 2016)

The location of the bomb blasts – between London's underground rail stations – made media access difficult, if not impossible; prompting the need to rely heavily on content sourced from the public (see, for example, Stacey's photo, 2005; Rachel North's eyewitness blog post, 2005; and the BBC's curated list of amateur videos, BBC 2005). Traditional media's use of amateur material, like Stacey's photo, therefore came about through necessity (David 2010). More than this, however, it recognised the compelling nature – *newsworthiness* – of content captured at the coalface of the crisis. Cook and Dickinson argue that the media's inability to access the bombings sites and the role the public played in reporting those scenes made the amateurs' texts all the more poignant. They say:

> Several newsworthy images were taken by individuals acting as witnesses to the event, with many of the resultant images resonating with a particularly raw edge that would have been difficult to replicate with the third-person objectivity of a tactically positioned news team. (Cook and Dickinson 2014: 207)

The other factor at play during crisis events, like the London bombings, England riots or Lee Rigby's murder, is the human desire to capture such news instantly, with the knowledge that many facts are still unknown. In Singer's words:

> In a major natural disaster or other breaking news story, the number of victims inevitably will change, damage estimates will change, the political situation on the ground will change. In the meantime, we want to know what's happening right now, and so we tolerate the mutability of the information as part of the story itself. We understand that fresh information emerges over time, and that what seems to be true now may not hold up. (2012: 5)

By contrast to this iterative model, Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti explain that journalistic reporting of crisis events involves:

> …bearing witness to human tragedy; that is, providing a truthful and morally compelling narrative of it, and thereby presenting the struggle and suffering of those caught up in such events as a cause of emotion and political action for their publics. (2013: 963)

With this in mind, it is understandable that survivors and witnesses would document the devastating scenes of crises, and their aftermath, to share with family and friends, and, potentially, news media.

Instead of the 'crisis in journalism' many touted as the result of allowing amateur reporters to be involved in news reporting, social media texts, such as those published by London bombings victims, for instance, have been proven to be a boon when reporting on crisis events. Malik claims the relationship between the amateur and professional journalist reporting on crises is far more of a cooperative partnership, which benefits the journalist most. There was a nervousness at first, he admits, until professional journalists remembered their role in telling such stories. He says:

> I think when social media first became a medium through which we realised people would be on the scene and they'd be able to capture the event in the way that a journalist would, the first reaction was therefore, 'This is going to be a threat because citizens will basically replace journalists'. (2016)

One of the many reasons this threat has not eventuated, is the level of training and skill involved in reporting on a crisis event effectively. Malik explains further:

> …citizens only turn up at maybe one event that's newsworthy in their life, in which [they] happened to be in the right place at the right time, whereas journalists are obviously trained and their job is to be at every event, in some capacity or another. (2016)

Anyone familiar with their smartphone camera can take a photo of an event, however it takes training and experience to be able to interpret that event for a wide audience or, at the very least, an audience with enough understanding of the event to correctly interpret what is happening. That moment recorded by a participant could be important to that one person,

such as their child blowing out birthday candles at a party, or it could signal a major life-changing event for millions, such as the September 11 terrorist attacks. While amateur content may tell the story of what happened from the scene of a crisis – sometimes even faster than professional journalists can – the amateur is not making an editorial decision on how to use the content, beyond who to share it with and what to say when they explain what is contained in the text when sharing it with others. A member of the public simply reporting on a crisis happening where they are at that time would have a different imperative – such as sharing something extraordinary or showing they were 'there' when it happened, for example taking 'disaster selfies' at a crisis scene – to that of a professional journalist tasked with reporting on the event for a media outlet (Ibrahim 2015; Koliska and Roberts 2015).

New ways to publish information from mobile devices are constantly being presented to an eager audience wanting to be the first in their network with the news. *Guardian* journalists tasked with crisis reporting in 2011 and 2013 had different tools available to them than their colleagues who covered the London Bombings in 2005. Not only did the availability of source material rise exponentially, but the number of tools available to publish, such as Twitter and live blogs, were also greater and more interactive. In times like a crisis, many news sources and publishing tools can be a boon, but is this a case of more content is better, or should the focus be on better quality content? In 2005 journalists were scouring the scene for witnesses to interview about the London bombings, but by 2013 these same professionals were asking people who had recorded footage of the attack if they could send them the content so they could use it in their reporting of the Rigby crisis. The always-on nature of social media and people's dependence on mobile phones meant it was guaranteed someone would record the events of that afternoon when Rigby died. Adebolajo and Adebowale knew this, and so did the media professionals. The combination of a busy high street location,

multitudes of social media users and a shocking terrorist attack made Rigby's murder an extraordinary media event. Like the London Bombings and English Riots before it, the Rigby crisis captured the attention of eyewitnesses and those witnessing second-hand through media later that day. The understanding that eyewitnesses will record such events and that media outlets will use such content in their reporting of the crises is a given now, positioning amateur social media texts firmly within the crisis reporting tool kit.

How did journalistic practice at *The Guardian* and its sources evolve?

In the *Guardian*'s bid to become "a digital-first organisation", where "placing open journalism on the web [was] at the heart of its strategy", the legacy newspaper's philosophy and practice had to change (The Guardian 2011). At the centre of this strategy was open journalism, which Rusbridger explained as "editorial content which is collaborative, linked into and networked with the rest of the web" (The Guardian 2011). *The Guardian* has also been considered "a frontrunner in adopting Twitter" across the industry (Broersma and Graham 2013: 451). This collaborative model involves utilising the same storytelling skills journalists have always possessed, in addition to the ability to integrate user-generated content (UGC) into that storytelling. Citing examples of two series where *Guardian* journalists used open techniques in asking for help to interpret the data and collaborating with readers – the British MP expenses scandal in June 2009 and later in its complex tax coverage – Rusbridger explained the resultant product, where readers felt involved in *The Guardian* and its reporting, was "better than we could do on our own" (2018: 203). To put it simply, he says, "[j]ournalism was no longer something done, or sent, to you but a process that was open, transparent and confident enough to welcome the involvement of others" (2018:203). Such an open process is beneficial to the journalists as it brings more subject experts into the

equation and their input saves time, but it also demonstrates the development of a partnership model of journalism where material produced by one-off, casual, or citizen witnesses is embraced for the good of the finished product. Instead of journalists being the single authority on the story, they are instead one of many agents of knowledge.

The task of UGC integration and utilising new technology within crisis reporting covers a number of areas, including processing and verifying the submitted content, checking for copyright clearance, crediting the source and labelling it as UGC (Wardle, Dubberley and Brown 2014; Williams, Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen 2011; Hermida and Thurman 2008). Drawing on his own experiences at *The Guardian*, Bates explained that "In a sense it is not a different thing that journalists do, but a new and additional means of doing the job… It's just that the technology was much older and perhaps not as flexible or as quickly reactive as modern technology allows" (2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). Walker argues this point around veracity further, confirming that journalists' use of UGC in their reporting does not change the process around checking facts. He says: "You're still, for the most part, trying to verify facts by knocking at doors and stuff like that" (Walker, P 2016, Pers. comm., 12 April). Instead, Walker considers social media has added "an extra level to reporting", which is consolidated by the increased expectations that result from being able to find information at your fingertips in our 24-hour news cycle (2016, Pers. comm., 12 April). For example, instead of writing a 700-word article by a 5pm deadline, today's professional journalist covering a crisis might also prepare a piece for the web and/or live-blog several versions of the story as new details came to hand and live-stream or tweet from the scene, illustrating that consumers have come to expect stories to be told in different formats (see also Tapsall 2001; Allan 2013). Live-tweeting was also happening within courtrooms in 2016, at the time of Walker's interview, with this practice continuing in many jurisdictions today (see, for

example, Gans 2017; Freivogel 2019; Kumar 2019; Puddister and Small 2019). Walker explains how he works within these parameters:

> If you're out on a big news story and the expectation is you tweet as you go, that often becomes as much of a news event, whatever might appear on the website or in the paper. [Editors] quite often use tweets from reporters who are out there because that's a quick and instantaneous way to embed them within the blog. (2016)

Live-tweeting and live-blogging are two forms of journalism that did not exist before social media, and belong to what Andrew Sparrow calls a "journalism subculture" (Sparrow, A 2016, Pers. comm., 8 April). Sparrow is referring to changes that came about in modern newsrooms with the advent of mobile technology, much of which has been explored throughout the three crisis events studied. Sparrow says this news environment, where social media is a factor, spawned faster ways of telling the news:

> You'd never have been able to do the kind of rich live-blogging that we do now where you're using social media sources and find valuable news sources on that very quickly because previously you just had to sit there and wait for the wired copy to turn up, and sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't. (Sparrow 2016)

Having amateur reporters participate in sharing the news alongside professional journalists could be seen as evidence that anyone can tell the news. Malik argues that this attitude devalues the work of journalists and places too much faith in the public. As Malik says, "citizens don't have the resources to do this full time. They only end up perhaps once in their lives ever capturing something of national importance" (Malik, S 2016, Pers. comm., 25 March). Not knowing the journalistic protocols around interviewing and capturing vital information to tell the story of a crisis, amateurs often fail to get all that is needed, such as "holding the phone the wrong way to not capturing basic details like who are they filming, what their names are" (Malik, S 2016, Pers. comm., 25 March). While these factors are important for content that can be used in a journalistic context, they are even more relevant

for use in crisis reporting because they could be the only texts depicting that aspect of the event. As a professional journalist in 2016 Malik understood what was needed to create newsworthy content, particularly during a fast-moving event, and this understanding comes from years of training and experience. He explains:

> It takes training to do that, and skill… but they do like to share. People like to tell stories. People like to go out into the world and capture things that interest them. That's not the same as knowing that it will interest others. And that's the skill of being a journalist. (2016)

Many of the professional journalists interviewed for this project highlighted industry training and experience as factors that separated them from amateur reporters when it came to reporting on each of the crisis events. While they acknowledge contributed texts from members of the public are useful – and sometimes even vital – when reporting on a crisis, professional journalists argue that what they do adds the context readers need when trying to understand the event.

The Guardian's use of social media texts and user-generated content as news sources peaked at different points during the three research samples studied. This illustrates an evolution not only in the use of contributed content in crisis reporting, but also in legacy media's acceptance of this practice. For the London Bombings sample a spike in articles using or mentioning user-generated content occurred on 11 July, five days after the bombings; and the number of articles using such content in England Riots coverage spiked on 10 August, four days after the riots began. Articles about Lee Rigby's murder where social media texts were included spiked on 24 May, the day after the terrorist attack. As audience participation in crisis reporting has expanded, been invited and become more accepted over time, the inclusion of social media texts in such reporting has accelerated. In 2005 it took five days for social media text use in media coverage to spike after the bombings, but eight years later,

after Rigby's death, that spike happened within a day. This evolution in *The Guardian*'s journalistic practice around social media texts is explored during the following discussion.

Key platforms used for each crisis event

At the time of the London bombings Facebook[10] was in its infancy, having launched the year before. With 22 million users at July 2005 (Jackson and Madrigal 2011), Myspace[11] was one of the most popular social networking sites, but image hosting site Flickr[12] and personal blogs were the primary platforms people used to share content and analysis about the bombings.

Social media platforms Twitter[13] and BlackBerry Messenger (BBM) were the key communication tools during the England Riots in 2011, with the former considered more of a social media platform than the latter. However, they were not the only platforms used by those who were sharing information, images and videos about the riots online. In a detailed explanation of how amateurs were initially sharing images of the riots, Kalter found Flickr contained "about 11 pages of pictures – some very graphic – showing destruction in the streets and wounded rioters", while "[s]ome of the most vivid photos of the riots were taken with iPhone application Instagram". Interestingly, Flickr and Instagram, which was launched in 2010, are popular social media sites for image sharing, which shows that people were sharing riot content on platforms they were already familiar with. The three remaining sites named by Kalter (2011) – Blottr, Citizenside and The-Latest – are citizen journalism sites, showing that a portion of those people who were sharing riot-related content wore an amateur

[10] facebook.com
[11] myspace.com
[12] flickr.com
[13] twitter.com

journalist's hat when doing so.

As has been shown above, the social media platforms Twitter and Facebook were used during the England Riots, but not predominantly as an incitement tool. It was actually the private BlackBerry Messenger (BBM) service available on BlackBerry smartphones that was used by many rioters to organise their activities (Lewis et al 2011). This platform was already popular with young people in the UK (Wasik 2012) but was embraced during the riots. The messaging system made it easy to notify a user's entire contact list using one message and, as the messages were private and encrypted, it made it harder for authorities to trace the culprits. Similar tools now would be WhatsApp, which has "end-to-end encryption" (WhatsApp 2019) or Facebook Messenger, which has a secret conversation facility that encrypts messages (Facebook 2019). As Wasik (2012) explains: "BBM is private, decentralised, blindingly fast and – most important – ubiquitous". To illustrate how BlackBerry Messenger became the medium for organising riots during that late summer period, he says: "From early on in the rioting, BBM messages were pinging around among the participants and their friends, who were using the service for everything from sharing photos to co-ordinating locations" (Wasik 2012). *Guardian* journalist Paul Lewis experienced first-hand how BlackBerry Messenger was used during the riots when he was shown the mass messages sent out by users as he reported on the riots. While at one of the riot sites, Lewis saw the message targeting Enfield: "I was shown the BBM – Blackberry Messenger – broadcast circulated hours earlier, announcing Enfield as a target" (Lewis 2011). He (Lewis 2011) says the message called on, "…everyone in nearby boroughs to 'start leaving ur yards' and bring 'bags trollys, cars vans, hammers the lott!!!'. It warned against passing the message to 'snitch boys' (police informants) and said the aim was to 'just rob everything'". The secure messaging service on BlackBerry phones that such users relied on to share their riot-related messages during the

2011 crisis was seen as one of the brand's major strengths (Muthukumar, Ramakrishnan and Krishnamacharyulu 2017) and had been used in marketing the devices. As these authors explain, "…BBM, is also renowned in regulated industries for being the most secure mobile messaging service…" (2017: 12). BlackBerry Messenger's privacy settings made it the ideal tool to share riot-related information without identifying the sender to a wider audience. BBM's encryption meant the media could only gain access to such information during the crisis if a user chose to share it, whereas information shared on more accessible social media platforms, like Twitter, is public and so could be co-opted easily.

By the time of Lee Rigby's death in 2013, Twitter and YouTube[14] were the prime platforms for capturing and sharing the event in Woolwich's main shopping street. The primary texts shared were video and tweets, on their own or with photos attached, many of which were picked up by traditional media outlets as part of their storytelling on the attack. While the most recent of the three case studies included in this thesis, which might indicate a higher number of social media texts as the platforms have more users now, the Rigby murder sample included fewer social media texts in traditional newspaper reporting then the England Riots sample two years earlier. However, reporting analysed for the later sample still had a higher number of social media texts used than the first crisis studied in 2005. This could be indicative of the differences in the crises themselves – the riots were more far-reaching and affected many more people over a longer time period, whereas Rigby's murder happened in one location with fewer witnesses on one afternoon. Three case studies is not a large enough sample to use in making broad claims, but this downturn in social media text usage within crisis reporting could point to either a peak in participatory reporting around 2011 or a change in the way journalists use texts within their reportage. This speaks to a deeper

[14] youtube.com

understanding of the value of social media texts, with newsrooms developing stricter guidelines around sourcing and verifying amateur texts for use in crisis reporting. Another implication is potential copyright claims relating to media use of texts without seeking permission first, with the combination of savvier users and more powerful social media platforms making it harder to use amateur content.

Speed: social media as an aid to fast reporting

Fast-moving stories present opportunities for publishing at speed but, equally, being first to publish does mean the necessary checks have been undertaken to ensure the source and their facts are credible. The factor of speed in reporting is analysed here using *The Guardian*'s coverage, starting with the London bombings. The mediated witnessing by members of the public immediately after the London bombings served an undeniable purpose when it came to reporting on the crisis. Part of the appeal – for the media outlets scouring for information, and the public who wanted to know what happened to family and friends – was the speed with which amateur content was captured and published. As Reading (2011) explains, eyewitnesses posted material online to publicly available sites within minutes of the bombs being detonated. These amateur images, combined with survivors' first-hand accounts of the crisis via blogs and Internet sites, built a "vast catalogue of DIY coverage more comprehensive and wide-ranging than anything available through the mainstream media" (Day cited in *The Guardian* 2005). This event changed the process of crisis reporting, according to Hermida. He says, "The London bombings signalled how the flow of information is reshaped when hundreds of people can quickly spread the news as they see it… Since 2005, the pace has accelerated, with news now travelling at the speed of a tweet" (2014: 19). In turn, media outlets acted quickly to turn the content around for publication to

meet the demands of the 24-hour news cycle and to feed an audience hungry for information and updates. The inclusion of UGC by professional journalists within their news reporting was so prolific, in some cases, that the practice became a story in its own right. Several days after the attacks, for example, there was a spike in the number of articles in *The Guardian* that mentioned or included content contributed by amateur journalists. As mentioned above, a sample of the articles published by *The Guardian* on 11 July 2005 focused on what the newspaper called a "shift in the balance of media power" (Day 2005) in reference to the involvement of accidental journalists in the reporting of the terrorist attacks.

Many of *The Guardian*'s articles analysing the impact of participatory journalism during the reporting of the 2005 terrorist attacks in London explicitly mentioned the speed at which the event's amateur journalists were sharing what they had witnessed with traditional media. While now commonplace, the practice of incorporating social media texts into traditional media coverage was a novelty in 2005 and media outlets were still grappling with how to do it effectively. Speaking at an e-Democracy conference three years after the bombings event, BBC news and current affairs director, Helen Boaden (2008), acknowledged that "Twenty-four hour television was sustained as never before by contributions from the audience" during the London bombings. One piece on the *Six O'clock News*, she explains, "was produced entirely from pieces of user-generated content" (Boaden 2008). Indeed, this UGC content sourced by traditional media organisations sustained crisis reporting during the 24/7 news cycle after the bombings. Reflecting on the power of the "citizen reporter" images and videos depicting the claustrophobic, smoke-filled underground train carriages and the remnants of the No. 30 bus in Tavistock Square, Day (cited in 2005) observes, "The mobile phone photographers, the text messagers and the bloggers – a new advance guard of amateur reporters had the London bomb story in the can before the news crews got anywhere near the

scene". Minutes after the bombings, Day explains that:

> Newsrooms around the capital were being deluged with pictures and video clips sent directly from the scene. The long-predicted democratisation of the media had become a reality, as ordinary members of the public turned photographers and reporters. (2005)

When it came to covering the London bombings there were a number of factors that combined to warrant the use of user-generated content: the location of, and conditions surrounding, the blasts and the need for ongoing coverage. These factors compelled traditional media outlets to not only co-opt material produced by bombings witnesses and survivors, but to also solicit the submission of such content direct, specifically for use within their news organisation's crisis reporting.

While some participatory journalists posted their bombings images online within minutes of the attacks, such as Dennen sharing Stacey's image on his moblog, others sent their images directly to the BBC. Alexander Chadwick took a photo of a line of people filing along the tracks out of the Piccadilly Line tunnel and sent it to the BBC, recognising the newsworthiness of his image (Chadwick 2005; Lorenzo-Dus and Bryan 2011: 24). The national broadcaster was publishing submitted content, like that from Dennen and Chadwick, by 11:30am on the day of the attacks (Taft 2014), with Boaden saying UGC was an "incredible resource". She writes: "Within 24 hours, the BBC had received 1,000 stills and videos, 3,000 texts and 20,000 e-mails" (Boaden 2008). Not unlike the photograph of Stacey, Chadwick's image subsequently circulated among media organisations the world over (Lorenzo-Dus and Bryan 2011: 24). Day's account of what happened illustrates just how fast news media outlets published or broadcast the submitted material:

> More than 300 emails containing an average of three images and about 30 video clips were sent to the yourpics@bbc.co.uk address on Thursday. The iconic picture of the devastated bus at Tavistock Square was sent to the website within 45 minutes of the bombing and was subsequently used on the front pages of the Guardian and the Daily Mail on Friday. Some

> mobile phone video footage was on air just 20 minutes after being received by rolling news channels. (2005)

Other media outlets, including *The Guardian*, similarly "sought to gather insights from readers to help round out their coverage" (Allan 2007: 8). Guardian Unlimited posted the following invitation on its news blog soliciting content: "Tell us your experiences, and send us your photographs, by emailing us at newsblog.london@gmail.com" (McIntosh 2005; Allan 2007: 8). Blogs and online diary entries added to the contributed cache of material that media drew on to tell the bombings stories on a more intimate level. Allan characterises how these personal accounts were used, explaining that:

> A range of the major news sites also made extensive use of personal blogs or online diaries written by Londoners caught up in the events and their aftermath. Some opened up newsblogs for their readers or viewers to post their stories, while others drew upon different individuals' blogs in search of material to accentuate a more personalised dimension to the tragedy. (2007: 9)

The day after the attacks, *The Guardian* published a number of personal accounts, including one from John Sandy, who described how "[a]t just after nine, there was an almighty bang and the train came to a sudden stop", and another from Jo Herbert, who wrote: "I was stuck in a smoke-filled, blackened tube that reeked of burning for over 30 minutes" (McIntosh 2005). Expanding on the importance of this contributed content to the London bombings coverage, Guardian Unlimited assistant editor Neil McIntosh observed at the time: "I see our relationship with bloggers and citizen journalists as being complementary on a story like the one we had today" (cited in Houpt 2005). Reflecting on the role that citizen journalists can play in unfolding news stories like the London bombings, McIntosh elaborates:

> Clearly, we're going to be in there early, and we have people who are practiced in getting facts. We'll still be looking a great deal to blogs to almost help us digest what's happening today. It's very complementary in that I think the blogs look to us to get immediate news and we maybe look to them to get a little bit of the flavour of how people are reacting outside the

> four walls of our office. (cited in Houpt 2005)

Reflecting on these events in 2016, McIntosh still sees the relationship between public participants and journalists in reporting a crisis event as complementary, but he assumes professional reporters will bring more context to an event. He says:

> I think often on social media people are just clicking what they see, and there's not much difference between amateur and professional… what you're hoping for when you see professional journalists using social media is that they're using that to tell a story in an accessible way, it's properly sourced, that points to useful resources and everything else… we wouldn't necessarily expect that from stories from members of the public. (2016)

Authentic first-hand stories and graphic images by participatory journalists, combined with a deficit of professional content, meant this amateur material became an integral part of the London bombings reporting – and paved the way for a more citizen-driven reporting model for future crises.

Like he outlined in relation to his London Bombings reporting, veteran *Guardian* journalist Stephen Bates did not use social media himself to report in the England Riots, saying he was undertaking more traditional reporting in Tottenham, where the riots started. However, as Bates explains, social media definitely plays a role in crisis reporting as "a valuable source of material" (Bates, S 2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). He explains this point further, using the pace at which material was published online as a critical factor: "Social media were very important in covering those riots because of the speed with which things were posted and film and video was made available. It certainly played a considerable part in illustrating what was going on" (Bates, S 2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). This material shared directly from witnesses became an important source for professional journalists covering the riots. Cook and Dickinson (2014) found the public worked with traditional journalists to help tell the

story during the England Riots. They say: “Citizens collaborated extensively with reporters in the middle of the London riots, for example, on Twitter and social networks, often advising and helping refine the coverage” (2014: 210). While the sheer volume of content shared online by those posting from the scenes of the riots made it impossible for traditional journalists to view everything published, it did mean they could pinpoint the areas they should focus their reporting on quicker than if they had relied solely on police reports, news tips or word of mouth. As such, social media has sped up the reporting process, especially for crisis reporting.

The Guardian political correspondent Peter Walker (2016) says the England Riots were a good example of the value of social media when reporting on a story that is moving – and changing – quickly, but also warns that online content is not a failsafe tool. He says, “If it is something like the riots, that’s a really good example of how social media can work very, very well or very, very badly” (Walker, P 2016, Pers. comm., 12 April). Walker’s comment sums up the doubled-edged sword scenario social media presented during the riots: users made compelling content available quickly, but that same content could not always be trusted. Of course, this is one of the age-old problems professional journalists face in their work daily – do they trust the informant who refuses to give a name and contact details, making it difficult to verify the explosive content they shared, or is the incredible photo published in a tweet really just too good to be true? Again, journalistic training, intuition and strong research skills are relied upon to discover what is fact and what is not. When Allan (2013) reviews citizen witnessing during the England Riots he says: “Videos on YouTube posted by eyewitnesses were valued for providing raw, frequently poignant, testimonies, although here too some proved seriously ill-informed upon closer inspection” (2013: 141). The issues around the speed at which contributed material is published during a crisis speak

to the influence that using such texts has on the quality of journalism produced, which is explored in more detail next.

The absent journalist

Three crisis events in the UK over the course of eight years show how social media texts have come to be incorporated into journalistic storytelling at *The Guardian*, but also illustrate the important role the public has come to play in crisis reporting. Each of the three events illustrated during this thesis were reported online before the first traditional media reports were published, with legacy media verifying these reports as part of their coverage (see Watson 2012; Ball and Lewis 2011; Pettifor and Lines 2013).

Personal accounts from survivors and witnesses told a part of the bombings story professional journalists could not, for two reasons: media could not access the bombings sites, but more importantly, they were not actually there. No journalist could convey the feeling of being trapped in a train carriage underground or a bombed bus in the same way as those who experienced it. Rachel North, one of the survivors of the blast that ripped apart the first carriage of the underground train at King's Cross station, describes her own act of citizen journalism – a seven-day *Survivor's Diary* published on the BBC's website – as a comfort to herself and others. She says:

> Writing was a way of releasing the demons, the madness and despair that can bend the shocked brain out of shape and fracture the sense of safety and self after too-close horror. When I was writing, I did not feel alone; though the audience was faceless, intangible, nonetheless I could feel a connection with those compassionate strangers. (North 2007: 113-114)

But, in the case of many crises like the London bombings, the personal reflections depicting

what it was like to be trapped in an underground train tunnel or in the middle of a bus explosion, coupled with the raw, unedited photos and film shared by blast survivors and passengers also served another purpose: they showed arresting scenes that told parts of the story about the bombings that a professional journalist could not.

Investigating how amateur content created during the attacks affected the reporting of the event, Watson explains that this "extremely personal, intimate, and visually graphic" material was a necessary ingredient in the media's coverage of the bombings in London (2012: 477). She says, "…unless they had been at the scene of the attacks, professional journalists would not have been able to capture images and video footage. Citizen journalists then provide rich, new data to the reporting of a piece of news" (Watson 2012: 476). The amateur involvement in the London bombings coverage is as much a part of the story as the content they produced, because it illustrates the changing attitude towards collaborative reporting. Leaving the impact of the personal depiction of the London bombings aside for a moment, Allan (2013) highlights another point that set the 2005 crisis apart from earlier events where the public had been involved in documenting texts: amateur reporters, like Dennen, were capturing the bombings aftermath from within the event itself. He explains:

> Mobile-telephone cameras captured the scene of fellow commuters trapped underground, with many of the resultant images resonating with what some aptly described as an eerie, even claustrophobic, quality. Video clips taken with cameras were judged to be all the more compelling because they were dim, grainy and shaky, and – even more important – because they were documenting an angle on an event as it was actually happening. (Allan 2013: 93)

This occurrence, where members of the public reported from within the crisis, was repeated during the England Riots. Two days after the riots began in 2011, Kalter (2011) published an article on 8 August for IJNet outlining the five main sites citizen journalists were using to document riot activity in images. These were Flickr (using the search term "Tottenham"),

user-generated news site Blottr[15], photo sharing platform Instagram[16], global citizen journalism website Citizenside[17] and British citizen journalism news portal The-Latest[18]. Writing in the first days after the riots had begun, Kalter explains that "…a series of haunting images have flooded the Internet over the past 24 hours", however the five sites listed contained the most "…captivating images of the breaking story" (2011). Kalter was pointing both media outlets and the public to what she considered to be the best images at that point in the story's timeline.

Within weeks of the launch of *The Guardian*'s user-generated content platform GuardianWitness[19], Rigby's murder presented an ideal opportunity to test how it would work in a crisis. Oliver, who was now part of *The Guardian*'s news communities team, says there was a debate about whether it the new platform was ready for something of this magnitude because editorial staff were still being trained on the site, however a case was made to "turn Witness on", with the knowledge all submitted material would be reviewed before being added to the live coverage (Oliver, L 2016, Pers. comm. 17 May). As Oliver explains, "…it was a bit of a test to see whether anyone would [contribute material]. The information we received, albeit only a small number of contributions, was invaluable" (Oliver, L 2016, Pers. comm., 17 May). This information included tip offs from neighbours when they saw police officers surrounding the attacker's homes. Oliver says:

> Some of it was centred around just pure news tips, which was really useful, so we were able to be present when police were raiding flats of the suspects. We wouldn't have known [the addresses] without readers telling us they'd noticed a large police presence next to their house. (Oliver 2016)

---

[15] blog.blottr.com
[16] instagram.com
[17] citizenside.com
[18] the-latest.com
[19] witness.theguardian.com

Additionally, a man travelling on a London Bus that was stopped by police after Rigby was murdered took photos from his vantage point and then sent them to GuardianWitness. Oliver says:

> ...they were images from an angle and from a perspective that we hadn't seen anywhere else. This was just incredible and I think it's interesting because it was so new to us. We used them in our live coverage, but I think now we probably would use that picture on the front of the newspaper. Three years ago there was still a kind of uncertainty about this content. (Oliver 2016)

Further to Allan's point about documenting an event from within, David (2010) claims that crisis events like the London bombings ties the concept of newsworthiness to immediacy in her study of how camera phone images and videos have affected news creation and sharing. Camera crews could not access London's subway system after the bombings so still images taken on camera-enabled phones were the only visual references available for some time (David 2010: 90). Images, like the one posted on Dennen's moblog on the morning of the attacks, were especially sought after by traditional news journalists and editors. This is because, as Pantti and Andén-Papadopoulos point out, citizen images of breaking news events, in particular, "help to establish journalism's own claim to authority" by facilitating immediate newsgathering and lending a "heightened sense of 'reality effect' to news reporting" (2011: 100).

Publishing as a participatory crisis reporter

When the riots broke out in London, Gareth Corfield was newly graduated from his journalism course and saw the civil unrest as an opportunity to test out his citizen reporting

skills. He set up a WordPress blog called *The West Londoner*[20], a Twitter account and Facebook page and started live-blogging what was happening around him and sharing what his networks were publishing on social media. Within a few hours his blog about the riots had grown from an audience of five friends to 3,000 hits and members of the public were contacting him with riot tip-offs from their local area.

Corfield adopted the live-blogging format to cover the riots, drawing information from Twitter as well as friends and contacts in the area, to give readers an immediate and central place to find out what was happening. He says, "Various friends of mine who were around some of the flashpoints were sending me updates on what was going on and then the readers were then sending me updates from wherever they were" (Corfield, G 2016, Pers. comm., 15 March). The England Riots saw participants, like Corfield, becoming hyper-local correspondents, reporting on what was happening in their small part of England. Photographer Dale Millar photographed the riots in Gloucester (Lewis 2011) and Upinder Randhawa reported live from Birmingham (Lewis 2011). Lewis spoke with Miller and Randhawa as he followed the riots around the country (2011). He explains: "Dale Millar, 26, spent the night photographing the riots [in Gloucester]" (Lewis 2011; Clifton 2011). Additionally, Lewis said he met Upinder Randhawa in Birmingham, the day after he used "…his tiny broadcaster, Sangat TV, to provide gripping live reports from the frontline of the disturbances" (Lewis 2011). As McIntosh says, "The London riots produced some really exceptional coverage from people who were concerned or committed locals" (McIntosh, N 2016, Pers. comm., 23 May). Corfield, Millar and Randhawa were all sharing information, images and video about rioting within their own communities, using their local knowledge and contacts to collect and curate this content and then publish to a wider audience.

[20] thewestlondoner.wordpress.com

In a blog for *The Guardian* about citizen journalism during the riots, Eddo-Lodge explains that people on the ground with mobile phones could capture material that traditional media outlets did not – or could not – access (2011). She says, "While the television broadcast images of burned buildings and cars, Tottenham's new citizen journalists captured the full extent of the damage, reaching the corners that the press couldn't" (Eddo-Lodge 2011). Eddo-Lodge also comments that the amateur nature of the updates, and the fact that this information was made more readily available than traditional media reports, meant those without professional training became key correspondents in spreading news about the riots. These citizens may have been experts on specific pockets within their city, but they were not experts on the civil unrest that was developing around them, which could make their niche information problematic if extrapolated as a wider representation of what was happening. As well as being amateur reporters on the riots, they were also straying into amateur analysis. As Eddo-Lodge explains: "…with amateur reporting comes amateur commentary, and suddenly all have declared themselves experts on the area" (2011). Participatory journalists Corfield, Millar and Randhawa exhibited some degree of journalistic understanding in what they published, with all three trained in media theory and participation. However, many more of those who tweeted photos and videos during the riots were only considering the social, 'look at me' angle of sharing that information by showing their networks what was happening where they were. The phenomenon of mass witnessing and online sharing that happened during the riots can be explained with Zuckerberg's ideas around human preoccupation with being first. She says, "…we're all so obsessed with 'breaking news' and entertaining our followers within our own networks, with being perceived as the ones in the know and the first to the information…" (Zuckerberg 2013: 215). In other words, these amateur tweets and updates added to the informal conversation that was bubbling away online about the riots, but

did not contribute significantly to analysis of the crisis event itself.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, one of the key points that differentiates the Lee Rigby crisis event from the other two crises covered in this thesis is the overt way social media was used by Adebolajo and Adebowale and those who witnessed their crime. Forward planning for social media reportage was seen with the way attackers in both Rigby's murder in 2013 and the Sydney Siege the following year presented themselves to witnesses. As Baker explains, "...with the Sydney siege and Woolwich murder [of British soldier Lee Rigby], we've seen events that are staged with online media coverage in mind. In both cases, passersby or hostages were asked to film statements to post on the web" (2015: 143). That Adebolajo and Adebowale committed a terrorist attack assuming it would be recorded highlights both the power of social media to share news of a crisis almost immediately, but also the level of importance assigned to the online social platforms on which we connect with others. Malik sees this event as one that brought the power of social media as storytelling tool into sharp focus. He says:

> Michael Adebolajo just simply stood on the street and spoke in a kind of impromptu broadcast, which he expected to be captured on mobile phones and to then be broadcast subsequently after that. And that's what's so fascinating: that this event was staged with social media totally built into its ability to deliver the horror. These people understood social media better perhaps than we did… The Lee Rigby [case] is a fascinating thing. I mean, what the hell? You're standing in front of a guy with a meat cleaver with blood all over his hand and you're filming him talking to you, right? I mean that is just astounding. (2016)

Although he had not prepared a formal statement before the attack, Adebolajo had handwritten a letter beforehand saying, "to fight Allah's enemies is an obligation". He gave this to witness Amanda Donnelly Martin as she tried to comfort Rigby after the attack (Cockerton 2013).

Like the London Bombings and England Riots that went before Rigby's murder, social media content of that crisis was published within minutes of the event taking place, which shows how journalistic practice had evolved through the inclusion of contributed texts. However, the content produced and shared was no longer being created by victims or bystanders acting passively and simply sharing something that happened in front of them; witnesses actively recorded a man being murdered (Pettifor and Lines 2013) and then filmed one of the murderers holding an impromptu press conference about the incident while still bloodied and holding the meat cleaver used in the attack (ITV News 2013). As Malik said, the press conference footage shows Adebolajo speaking directly to a mobile phone. Wardle et al (2014) say this "…was considered a watershed moment for UGC" because it started conversations about the practice of buying amateur content taken at the scene of breaking news stories. Adebolajo's spontaneous address was sent to, purchased and broadcast by ITV News (2013) later that day and then used by media outlets around the world under syndication, partnership distribution or fair use agreement (Wardle et al 2014). The footage purchase, and subsequent broadcast, led to newsroom discussions around the need for contracts to be drawn up that could be signed at the scene of such an event, and to the decision that senior journalists with authorisation to spend money on such content should be the staff attending such events (Wardle et al 2014). While this points to a changing landscape when it comes to the way traditional media covers a breaking news event, and the tools that can be drawn on to flesh out reporting, it also signals a change in the level of trust placed in the hands of those purporting to be participatory journalists.

The witness who filmed the press conference told media Adebolajo approached him as he was filming the scene and said: "I just want to talk to you with your camera" (cited in Pettifor and Lines 2013). The same *Mirror* article by Pettifor and Lines also quotes the witness as

saying, “They wanted to give a message to the British government. That’s what they said to me when they were talking to my camera”. The pair “were more worried about having their photo taken” and it was “as if they wanted to be on TV”, another witness, called James, told the BBC (cited in BBC News 2013). This deliberate courting of those with smartphones speaks directly to Frosh’s view that, “Electronic media have multiplied the number of witnessed events reported to distant others, and multiplied greatly the number of those distant others” (2009: 50). The fast pace of crisis reporting creates tensions around verification, speed and ethics for media outlets, but the added factor of working with the public to produce those stories leads to ongoing negotiations about newsworthiness, transparency and ethical considerations.

Mainstream media co-opting user-generated content

Dennen and Stacey’s fast thinking in the minutes after the first three bombs were detonated in London’s peak hour meant that the picture captured by Ward and posted to Dennen’s moblog became one of the first visual records of the London bombings, amateur or otherwise. Dennen had already developed the mobile blogging platform, Moblog, when the London bombings happened, so it gave him an outlet on which to publish and discuss the event with friends and online contacts. When Stacey texted him the photo showing he was trapped in one of the underground train tunnels near Kings Cross station Dennen recognised its significance and immediately asked permission to share the photo with a wider audience. As he explains:

> …the first photo to emerge was the one where Adam was holding a jumper around his mouth to stop the smoke. I said this is a really an important photo, we should put it up with a Creative Commons licence… so I posted it to moblog and it then just got picked up really rapidly, which then meant the blog became a focal point. (Dennen 2016)

Not only was Stacey's photo made available within 15 minutes of the first blast, it illustrated the story well by depicting the fear, confusion and claustrophobia that the bombing victims encountered. At a time when there was little information available, the speed at which this part of the bombings story was made available served to inform both the public and the wider media.

Interestingly, despite the fact he was sharing content on the mobile blogging platform he developed, Dennen does not consider himself a blogger – rather, he sees himself as "someone very interested in the power of mobile phone photography [and] what happens when you put a camera phone in the hands of everybody" (Dennen, A 2016, Pers. comm., 5 February). In the years since the London bombings Dennen has come to see the image of Stacey in the claustrophobic surrounds of the London Underground immediately after the explosion as an example of the power of mobile media. Others, like Seward, have called the photograph an "iconic portrait of the terrorist attacks" (2005). The image – one of several to emerge from citizen mobile phones at the scene of the blasts – "was featured prominently in television broadcasts on the BBC and Sky News and on media Web sites across the world" (Seward 2005). A search of Google Images, using the URL from Dennen's moblog, reveals the extent of the image's distribution as well as its continued popularity. Results range from articles on *The Guardian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *NPR*, *Mashable* and *Medium* websites to its use in journal articles, blog posts, Wikipedia and Wikimedia entries, posts on Flickr and YouTube, a mention on a Reddit London bombings thread, slide presentations and in a number of book titles. In this regard, Dennen's posting of the image of Stacey to his moblog site under a Creative Commons licence was a strategic decision. More to the point, it arguably demonstrated an inherent news sense or, at the least, a level of media literacy of

what was in the public interest. But, for Dennen, the image – irrespective of its journalistic value – was more "important from a social perspective". He explains:

> I demonstrated that whilst that picture was on the front page of newspapers in every country in the world the following morning, it had already travelled around the internet and [been] seen on hundreds, if not thousands, of news sites. So it really brought home how remarkably powerful images are... (Dennen 2016)

This statement shows Dennen knows the importance of images when it comes to telling a graphic story, like the London bombings, but also reveals his understanding of human desire to know what is happening as quickly as possible.

By the time of the London bombings the process of sharing news quickly had accelerated through the development of digital technologies. In July 2005 such technology had advanced to the point where many citizens had the power of a mobile recording device in their hands in the form of camera-enabled mobile phones. The first mobile phone with a built-in camera was released in 2000 and by the end of 2004 two-thirds of phones sold worldwide were camera phones (Hill 2013). When the London bombings happened a wide range of technology that could help the public document the scenes of the attacks was available. As Potts explains:

> In 2005, the idea of accessing the internet through a mobile device such as a PDA or cell phone was already well established. And London commuters quickly turned to these devices to post updates to blogs and social networking sites – updates that often included photos taken by the onboard digital cameras common to most cell phones. One such example is the image of Adam Stacey taken as he escaped the Underground. (Potts 2014: 67)

This examines the use of social media texts within crisis reporting because of potential difficulties in covering such fast-moving events, however there is also an argument for using such texts in more traditional journalism. *The Guardian*'s collaboration with readers on MP

expenses and tax reporting, which was discussed earlier this chapter, shows how journalists continued to tap into readers' insights online. For example, the masthead's travel site Been There was created for reader recommendations about hotels, bars, markets, beaches, restaurants, shops, museums and an online community of 350,000 registered educational professionals was also established so teachers could share learning resources (Rusbridger 2018). Journalist Paul Lewis has already been cited already for his riots reportage, but his process of crowdsourcing readers' and social media users' knowledge had been honed when he used Twitter to find out what really happened during the 2009 G-20 protests in London, when news vendor Ian Tomlinson died. Lewis doubted the story that Tomlinson died from a heart attack while police "had come under a hail of missiles while rescuing him" (Rusbridger 2018: 201). His call for more information unearthed content from a New York fund manager, who had filmed "the moment when a policeman struck Tomlinson from behind" (2018: 201). Lewis also used Twitter to investigate the death of Angolan refugee Jimmy Mubenga while he was being forcibly deported on a British Airways flight.

Higgins sees the merging of the boundaries between professional and amateur in citizen journalism as a real opportunity for the public and media alike. This meld of content presents a collaboration that, in its finest moments, can result in valued pieces of journalism, although it can also create generic works that appeal to a limited audience. He says:

> There needs to be a realisation by news organisations that there is value in working on [citizen journalism projects] in increasing amounts. Sometimes it feels like citizen journalism has been reduced to taking photographs of bad weather, but there's a lot more you can do with that. (Higgins 2016)

Laura Oliver started a community projects role with *The Guardian* a matter of months before the England Riots crisis. She quickly saw the riots story was the kind where her team could

encourage public discussion and debate around the topic and invite readers to get involved in the newspaper's coverage of the event. Oliver explains how this role works to facilitate collaboration on a big breaking event: "If you're a news editor [at *The Guardian*] and the biggest story of the day is emerging, you just know that this is going to be the story that attracts everyone's attention all day – something like the UK riots" (Oliver, L 2016, Pers. comm., 17 May). A story like the England Riots was an ideal assignment in which to involve readers, Oliver explains:

> With the UK riots we were keen to open up discussion quite quickly and guide it in a way where we were saying, 'Look our reporters are on the ground, help guide them, you know help us work out where we should go, who we should speak to', and that worked very effectively as a sort of crowdsourcing exercise. (2016)

However, she says the fluid nature of the developing story, with unverified content being published online from myriad sources, meant *The Guardian* had to pull back and take stock in some areas to ensure editorial staff were acting ethically. She said: "As soon as arrests started happening we had to be very open with our readers and say, 'Look these are the areas we won't be opening our discussion on because it's now a legal issue'" (Oliver, L 2016, Pers. comm., 17 May). This shows that, despite having the amateur content depicting the riots at its disposal, *The Guardian* was still bound by the journalistic code of ethics to ensure nobody was defamed during its reporting. This distinction between professional and amateur reporting of crisis events is repeated throughout the three events studied in depth, but is also evident in crisis reporting before and after the timeline covered here.

On the other side of this professional/amateur crisis reporting discussion, Corfield generated a wave of online success as the riots raged around him. Surprised at how quickly his home-grown citizen blog became a trusted news source on the England Riots, Corfield regularly

checked his user statistics and found inbound traffic from, "mainstream media URLs in places like *The Telegraph* and *The Guardian*," as well as Twitter, Facebook and internet forums and discussion boards (McAthy 2011). After Corfield's blog was mentioned on *Sky News* and posted to Reddit in reference to the riots, the site received international recognition, with the blog registering one million hits within 24 hours (Bartlett 2011). Corfield was also contacted by Australian radio and US television stations for comment and for live interviews. Despite the intense media interest received, Corfield was not contacted by media outlets asking permission to use content from his blog, *The West Londoner*. He says, "Nobody asked if they could use the material, which … was a bit cheeky," however he understands publishing such content online makes it readily available. He says: "I'm kind of putting it out there for public consumption" (Corfield, G 2016, Pers. comm., 15 March). While Corfield might understand the impact of publishing content online and, therefore, knew the implications of making it available to the public, the lack of permission sought from traditional media outlets points to differing standards around attribution of sourced content across the media as a whole. This concept is explored further in the verification part of this chapter.

Collaborative reporting, as outlined above with *The Guardian*'s and Corfield's riots coverage, was the idea behind the GuardianWitness site. Oliver explains the site was a communal repository for any number of topics and assignments, but when it came to the Rigby case two years after the riots, it was the reporting opportunity they had been waiting for to test the site. Despite the rich content the Rigby crisis would inevitably provide for *The Guardian*'s fledging participatory journalism website, Oliver says some of her colleagues wanted to err on the side of caution even though they had "done all the checks". She says:

> I think now we'd be comfortable with it as an organisation, but I think there still was a bit of trepidation. It was an experiment to turn [GuardianWitness] on in that way and we talked so much about that and also how to handle people who get in touch in that kind of situation and what they need and how to deal with them in order to verify the content. (Oliver 2016)

A selection of contributions sent to GuardianWitness relating to the "Woolwich attack" (2013) were still available on the user-generated content platform until it was retired in August 2018 (The Guardian 2018). Despite closing the site, to which "114,000 people have contributed over 350,000 stories, photos and videos" (2018), user-generated content is still commissioned and accepted via *The Guardian*'s community section[21].

Reflecting now on editorial attitudes towards user-generated and submitted graphic content at the time of Rigby's 2013 attack it is evident the role of social media texts in crisis reporting has continued to evolve in the years since. For example, the GuardianWitness platform invited contributors to submit content after the floods in Bulgaria in June 2014 (GuardianWitness 2014) and the European refugee crisis (GuardianWitness 2016). Content shared by the public for assignments included images and personal accounts from people at the scene of these crises. This shows a changing public attitude towards crisis reporting, with witnesses willing to document traumatic events as they happen in readiness for, or in anticipation of, an eager audience of readers via legacy media outlets. This stronger stomach for graphic content, coupled with a greater awareness of global crises (Cottle 2009), has continued to develop with the advent of 24-hour news and more occurrences of contributed content appearing in crisis reporting. Constant access to news gave us the opportunity to see international crises, such as the September 11 terrorist attacks, played out at any time of the day rather than on the nightly news. Interestingly, some research argues readers tend to be

[21] theguardian.com/community

less concerned about consuming graphic content if the event has happened in a far-away country (Keith et al 2006: 258), which speaks to an attitude of distance and separation from involvement. However, an event happening in our own sphere of reference presents an opportunity to be both witness and the storyteller. Considering the graphic nature of some crises where user-generated content has been recorded and contributed, does that mean amateur reporters conform to the journalistic role to tell the story first and deal with the traumatic nature of the event and its impact afterwards?

Additionally, we have developed an instinct to document anything of interest on our mobile phones, particularly something like a crisis event (Jardin cited in Niles 2005). As the public's interest in viewing and participating in such content increases, so too does their impetus to document. Social media content gives news stories an authenticity and immediacy that cannot always be found from other sources. The public nature of content sourced via social media platforms makes it more representative of the whole audience, rather than using the same voices regularly. As Oliver says, "working with users of social platforms can just completely change the course of a story" (Oliver, L 2016, Pers. comm., 17 May). The social media content users were sharing on the bombings, riots and Rigby's murder presented an opportunity for *The Guardian*'s journalists to give readers alternative angles of the developing story, but also highlighted some areas within crisis reporting that needed further attention, namely how to verify such content, how the content should be attributed and when it is appropriate to use amateur content.

Veracity: the check and balance

The London bombings saw traditional media outlets embrace the use of amateur content to

bolster their own crisis reporting, however this submitted material still underwent the same rigorous veracity checks. Despite calling for content, the media still tested user-generated digital images for accuracy or evidence of digital manipulation (Allan 2007). For example, the BBC published photos and videos from witnesses when reporting on the London bombings, but added captions and disclaimers for further explanation and clarification (Watson 2012; Van Dusseldorp 2005). Watson explains that this practice gave the images context:

> Photos chosen for publication by the BBC can be seen to tell a story of the unfolding events of the day, ranging from images that present the beginning of news of the blasts in London, to proceeding to show images of people caught underground, victims, emergency services, and finally, coming to the end of the day, pictures show Londoners attempting to travel to an alternative destination. (2012: 476)

Even the image of Stacey, published originally under a Creative Commons licence on Dennen's moblog, was subject to qualification in terms of its veracity. Sky News, for example, credited the image as "a passenger's camera photo", while the BBC was similarly cautious in its captioning: "This photo by Adam Stacey is available on the Internet and claims to show people trapped on the underground system" (Van Dusseldorp 2005). However, there was no dispute regarding the authenticity of the image for Dennen, who published the image on his moblog. He explains: "The minute I knew that he [Stacey] was there – he had said so – he sent me that picture, the veracity of that message was never a question". Peters identifies this very situation as the 'two faces' of witnessing: the authority of not only seeing, but also saying (2001: 710). "A private experience enables a public statement", he writes, "but the journey from experience (the seen) into words [or images] (the said) is precarious" (Peters 2001: 710). Even within the public forums of Dennen's moblog and Flickr, where another user uploaded Stacey's photo, there was still opportunity for accuracy checks (Potts 2014: 69). Potts says, "…participants were able to comment on the validity of the image of Adam

Stacey…" (2014: 70). As a friend, Stacey was a trusted source for Dennen and so there was no further check needed. Conversely, the credibility of mainstream media hinges on an expected level of editorial standards, with checks and balances carried out to ascertain quality of the contributed images and content; veracity in determining the material is true; rights around who can use the images; and appropriate compensation, with an agreement on payment determined before images are used. During an unfolding crisis event, like the London bombings, and within a 24-hour news cycle, sourcing information fast may be an imperative for the media, as already discussed in this chapter, but being first must come second to being right. When asked whether news journalists and photo editors contacted him in the ensuing hours and days after the bombings to verify the accuracy of the image of Stacey in the underground train network, Dennen is matter-of-fact, saying "there wasn't any point that anyone was pressing me for more validation of it than I was able to give". In his mind the matter was settled because he trusted his friend and he had a ready-made publishing platform available, but herein lies one of the major differences between professional and amateur crisis reporting: veracity checks.

As was shown with rumours of a suicide bomber at Canary Wharf during the London Bombings and the tweets about a tiger roaming London's streets during the England Riots, social media can be used equally as successfully to spread untruths as it can facts. This factor was one of prime consideration for the journalists interviewed, namely because it goes against their professional ethics. Bates says this side of social networking can be dangerous because:

> …some stories get reported and blown up into great crises and enormous happenings, which are actually relatively trivial, maybe even non-existent, and, therefore, give a false view of what is happening. It's not an unmitigated good; it's sometimes an unmediated evil. (2016)

Fast-moving stories like crises need an authoritative voice to provide the answers readers and viewers are seeking. This voice could be a journalist, an expert on the topic or a spokesperson. Irons faced difficulties in sourcing accurate content when she was collating material for her Tasmanian bushfires Facebook page in 2013. As Irons explains, "If you don't have access to the right information, that does make things really tricky and that's when the rumour mill does get greater" (Irons, M 2016, Pers. comm., 8 April). Irons was not a professional journalist, but a social media user who developed her own ways to check veracity because she understood the imperative to circulate only correct information. The Guardian had its own verification process which, Oliver explains, came into play once the information was sourced via social media. Oliver says:

> Irregardless of whether it's something that was sent directly to us or it's something we've sourced from a social channel, we'll always ask the same questions. The first question is always is this too good to be true? Does this look like the thing this person is saying it is? (2016)

As has been shown above, a multitude of social media platforms on which to publish information does not guarantee a crisis-related text will be picked up and used by traditional media in its own reporting of the event. Equally, a published text does not mean it is true. As with any content a professional journalist uses to tell a story, there are tricks and tools to test the accuracy of what has been published. These checks become even more imperative when speed is a factor in reporting, as is the case when news of a crisis breaks.

How are social media texts verified?

For all the positives therefore associated with using UGC as a news source in a breaking story like the London bombings, England Riots or Lee Rigby's murder, there are also areas

where caution must be taken, namely in terms of verification. Verification tools used by today's professional journalists to check digital texts were developed because the rise of false content shared online (Veglis and Panagiotou 2018). As fact-checking site Africa Check explains in its verification guide, "With rising awareness of 'fake news', people are more cautious of reflexively hitting share. But how can you quickly verify whether what you're seeing is true, especially when you're on your mobile phone?" (Joseph 2018). This guide highlights free websites and a mobile app – TinEye[22], Google Reverse Image Search[23] and Fake Image Detector app – that can be used to verify images on the go. Veglis and Panagiotou outline additional verification tests and tools, by suggesting time, through the sun's position, and weather conditions should be checked as well using Wolfram Alpha[24] and SunCalc[25] (2018: 33). The place and time an image was taken can also be checked by inspecting EXIF (Exchangeable image file format) data using an online metadata reader like Find Exif[26] (Veglis and Panagiotou 2018: 33). Video and multimedia texts can be verified using additional tools, namely InVID Verification Plugin[27] which was developed by the InVID European Project to help journalists using Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox internet browsers to checks facts (Mezaris V 2018), and First Draft's NewsCheck Chrome extension[28] (Wardle 2017). This extension was developed using funding from the Shuttleworth Foundation, and "allows people to investigate the authenticity of an online image or video by running through a standardized checklist" (Wardle 2017). Journalists using this checklist are prompted to look at whether a text is original, who created it and where and when it was created, which follows a similar format to the questions Oliver outlined above, as

[22] tineye.com
[23] images.google.com
[24] wolframalpha.com
[25] suncalc.net
[26] findexif.com
[27] invid-project.eu/tools-and-services/invid-verification-plugin/
[28] chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/firstdraftnewscheck/japockpeaaanknlkhagilkgcledilbfk

used by *Guardian* journalists.

While learning how to use these tools adds time and effort to the expanding role of a modern journalist, knowing how to test the veracity of an electronic text can be the difference between award-winning crisis coverage and publishing apologies, or even facing legal action. Several journalists interviewed for this thesis in 2016 said there were easy checks when it came to video content, such as confirming the video description says what is actually shown in the film, cross checking the dates and location and confirming weather conditions for the day. While the tools listed in the paragraph above are more sophisticated than simple cross checks, Walker makes a valid point that has been a relevant check for decades: "…if the video shows it's a sunny day, but you know from the retrospective weather it was raining, then that casts a seed of doubt" (Walker, P 2016, Pers. comm., 12 April). Google Street View - a tool Corfield used heavily while live blogging the England Riots - shows building layouts and satellite images so the skyline in an image or video can be compared. However, Walker says much of the verification process still comes down to simple visual checks, such as whether or not an image looks accurate based on your knowledge of the topic, whether there are other images or videos of the crisis from alternative angles, and whether you can ask someone who knows the area better to confirm the image for you. Higgins also uses Google Street View, along with Google Earth, *Huffington Post*'s War Wire, location-based search engine Echosec and location-based photo sharing website Yomapic to find and verify geolocated or geotagged social media posts. Higgins says, "I collect all the information I can find then I start trying to geolocate videos and verify what I can about them and build up all the evidence I can find about an event" (Higgins, E 2016, Pers. comm., 7 June). When it comes to information from a source via social media, Walker notes there is a hierarchy that is dependent on who the source is, which is still relevant in today's professional checks. This

idea was explored with Dennen's use of his friend Stacey's bombings photo. As Walker says:

> If it's someone that you know, for example, if it's a *Guardian* reporter there then you'll take it as being true. If it's a report from another media organisation then we'll treat it with a bit more caution… If a tweet or Facebook post has video or pictures with it, which show what it's claiming has taken place, then that gives it more credibility too because those are obviously much more difficult to fake. (2016)

As outlined above, testing the veracity of information and texts on social media platforms is actually a series of judgement calls, starting with the volume of updates about the topic, how much supporting evidence is available, whether or not the updates and evidence can be confirmed, who the source is and whether other media outlets have broadcast anything about the incident. More often than not, social media texts act as a source of news to be followed, rather than confirmation of a crisis event.

Witnesses and amateur reporters who happen to be in the right place at the wrong time during a crisis, and those citizen journalists who produce content about a crisis with the intention of submitting it to a media outlet, are not compelled to adhere to the same professional ideals and standards as journalists. Arguably this provides a level of agility in a participatory journalist's response to a crisis, as seen with Dennen's post to his moblog during the London bombings. On the other side of that coin, this situation presents a challenge (as well as an opportunity) for the professional news journalist who is sourcing such content to include in their crisis reporting. In omitting some parts of the process a professional journalist would typically undertake when sourcing content to tell their story, an amateur reporter can publish their content much quicker. But there is no guarantee such content is an accurate depiction of the crisis event. To illustrate this point further, the relevance of carrying out veracity checks was confirmed the day of the London bombings when many of the tips received by news organisations about the attacks turned out to be false (Allan 2007: 17; McIntosh 2016). *Times*

Online news editor Mark Sellman reflects on the situation, saying: "You're in a very hot point, stuff was coming in but it's not necessarily reliable, and you have to check it out… Someone said a suicide bomber was shot dead in Canary Wharf, and that was an urban myth" (cited in Houpt 2005). Such content is, as Bell (2005) claims, a double-edged sword. As she explains: "authenticity is fairly easy to establish when you have clear footage of train carriages being evacuated, but as the net spreads wider to catch the words and images of ad hoc reporters, verification becomes far harder" (Bell 2005). When it is simple to verify what the amateur image or video depicts, the professional journalist's decision to use such material is an easy one, however once there is doubt about the text's accuracy the decision becomes far more involved.

An accurate depiction of an event is a simple definer when it comes to separating professional from amateur journalists. While the content presented by an amateur may be accurate, it is just one version of the event. A professional journalist offers multiple sources, speaking with experts and witnesses to present a fuller and deeper analysis of the crisis for readers and viewers. Content sourced from social media and other digital technologies, Bates explains, "does need to be mediated and that's where journalism and its professional standards come in" (Bates, S 2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). He continues: "What you can do is make sure you do not show gratuitously horrific images. These days no one in the media is going to be able to completely censor those things or disregard them" (Bates, S 2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). Smartphones that allow people to take and share photographic images and video footage of a crisis event can be a "valuable source of material of what is going on", according to Bates, but there are ethical considerations that must be acknowledged when publishing such material (Bates, S 2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). He explains further:

> We have to get used to the fact that more gruesome images will be around and that [has put] the impetus and the initiative back on the viewer themselves to decide what they want to see, what they don't want to see and what they think their children shouldn't see. I'm not sure that newspapers… will be able to censor as effectively as in the past. But it does need to be mediated and that's where journalism and its professional standards come in. (Bates 2016)

However, there is another side to this debate: the need for explanation and analysis, particularly during a breaking news event. "While mobile phone footage can illustrate and illuminate an incident, of course it can also manipulate it and distort it", Bates explains (2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). He considers "one of the more worrying features of the use of social media in spreading information, is misinformation and dubious sources of information that expand and explode a story, which otherwise would have been contained" (Bates, S 2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). One of the most important roles a professional journalist undertakes when reporting on a fast-moving event, like a crisis, is providing context to what is happening. As Bates elaborates:

> …that may be where old-fashioned journalism comes back into its own because it has the capacity to explain and analyse as well as the immediate depiction. And that may ultimately be journalism in the future: not so much a depiction of the event – because there are other sources of that – but in the explanation behind it so that people can understand better what is going on in the world. (2016)

However, Bates can see the benefits of technologies that enable the public to participate in crisis reporting as it "brings a new dimension to journalism" (2016). Digital technologies, such as social media, are a "useful ancillary tool," according to Bates, in that "it is not a different thing that journalists do, but a new and additional means of doing the job" (Bates, S 2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). If a participatory journalist can bring sought-after content to crisis reporting that shows an angle a professional journalist cannot cover, such as the contributed bus photos from the Rigby murder Oliver described earlier, then the professional can take that content, find experts to analyse the situation and provide the context needed to

understand the event. In this way, social media has forced parts of the news production process to reverse (Brandtzaeg et al 2016). Where once an expert was contacted to find out if, or confirm that, something critical was happening, social media is now often the first source from which to access information. Then an expert offers confirmation and analysis.

Amateur reporting of the England Riots presented such a swathe of information online that it this case drove home the imperative of how crucial it was for *The Guardian* team to respond quickly in learning how to negotiate the online space and navigate the methods in which to verify online sources during the 2011 event. Information from internet-based sources to report on a news story it must be verified just like information sourced from an interviewee or via a media release, however, in the heat of a modern crisis event, when updates are published minute-by-minute in traditional media and online, a balance must be struck between the need to report the event and the need to check the accuracy of every piece of information. This section answers how *Guardian* journalists verified social media texts and also shows the impact technology has had on that journalistic process, both at that masthead and other traditional media outlets. BBC Academy editor Matthew Eltringham calls this fine balance "The Line of Verification" (Beckett 2011). On one side of the line is the information that is known to be true because it has been confirmed by independent sources, and on the other side is information that exists online on social media or the internet, but which cannot be confirmed. Those who are interested in the crisis event, whether for a professional or other reason, engage with this untested "dark" content as part of the building story. As Eltringham puts it:

> We need to change our reporting activity to engage with 'stuff' on the dark side of the line as part and parcel of our daily journalism. Social media unleashes the capacity of people to publish and share rumour, lies, facts and factoids. We – as a trusted broadcaster (along with other journalists of course) become increasingly significant as a reference clearing house, filtering facts from fiction. (cited in Beckett 2011)

The professional and participatory journalists who covered each of the three crisis events studied, and where social media texts were used in reporting, had to determine which side of the line the information they shared and received was on. Those operating at an amateur level interpreted the line more loosely.

Corfield's live-blog updates during the England Riots elevated his blog to be a media outlet for thousands of readers eager to find out what was happening in their city. Corfield had no formal training in methods or tools professional journalists commonly used to verify content and found it the easiest way to verify the information he was receiving about the riots was via social media. He says: "It was purely me looking at it and going what smells right and what doesn't?" (Corfield, G 2016, Pers. comm., 15 March). Explaining his verification method further, he says:

> If I had one person in an area saying something's happening, I'd take that as an indicator that something might be happening here and this is one person with a very small field of view, relatively speaking. If I had two or three people in the same area saying much the same thing and there was something like pictures or a video that I could actually look at myself and get on Google Street View and check out what the pictures showed me were actually meeting up with how the area looked normally, then I would be tempted to roll with that. (Corfield 2016)

For further verification when someone offering a tip-off said there was activity happening near them, Corfield put a call out to readers and followers in that suburb asking them to tell him more. He explains how his online searches revealed leads:

> If I'd see someone say something that caught my eye – let's say 'Rioters have smashed the shops opposite my house' was a typical thing, I would look at that and I would take a look down at their timeline… I would always take that as a, 'Something's happening here which looks reliable; is there somebody else there who can corroborate that?' (Corfield 2016)

The West Londoner built up a following quickly as Corfield coordinated information coming

in from people on the ground and then published what he was able to confirm. He says, "I found that two-way communication was really useful in getting a heads up on what was happening and giving me the means to independently verify what was going on" (Corfield, G 2016, Pers. comm., 15 March). Corfield considered photos and videos to be reliable sources that supported the claims made by people contacting his blog and social media channels, because he could recognise local landmarks or use Google Street View to cross-check locations. He explains this approach further: "I placed a great weight on pictures – and also on ordinary Twitter users. Most of my information for the live blog came from Twitter" (Corfield, G 2016, Pers. comm., 15 March). While Corfield's methods did not strictly conform to standard journalistic verification practices, verifying to his standard meant Corfield was often scooping media outlets. He says:

> I would verify something to my own standard. I would write it on the blog and say this is happening, and then about 10 or 15 minutes later I would see the big boys would then follow up with much the same info and they'd get delays in verifying it through their own means. (Corfield 2016)

Corfield's riot coverage stood out from other participatory journalists reporting on the riots because of his: "Speed, accuracy and collation of information from the ground, sifting between rumours and facts" (Bartlett 2011). While Corfield was not a professional journalist at the time of the England Riots (he is now a newspaper sub-editor), he had studied journalism and understood the industry, so had a level of understanding many other participatory journalists did not share.

While Corfield was satisfied he knew the truth if he had several people corroborating information he had received, *The Guardian*'s verification method required greater numbers of sources to confirm the facts, or a journalist attending the scene. Walker explains the process:

"…we'd never actually report anything until we had someone down there to actually check it out … or if it could be verified by a lot of tweets, particularly tweets using video or photos" (Walker, P 2016, Pers. comm., 12 April). Bennett also describes the BBC's verification process when it comes to using blogs as a source as one still anchored in existing journalistic practice:

> BBC journalists talk in terms of cross-referencing, contacting bloggers via email or telephone and relying on their 'instincts to identify the wheat from the chaff'… They require corroborating evidence, must perform checks and 'need to work with bloggers in the same way' that they 'work with [other] sources'. (2013: 191)

This higher standard of verification required by professional media outlets, like *The Guardian* and BBC, as well as the blogger Higgins (2016, Pers. comm., 7 June), ensured their reputation for trusted reporting stayed intact during events like a crisis. It also points to legacy media's further reliance on, and levels of, verification needed for content and sources. This fact-checking process is a combination of new and old reporting methods, where social media texts are the source, but confirmation is still provided via an interview.

Although Corfield did publish many riot updates before his professional counterparts, he admits his system wasn't infallible. Corfield says he was caught out in the midst of frenetic riot reporting: "I did get tripped up by three or four people who cottoned on to my verification method and said that they'd seen something going on in their area and it turned out to be nonsense" (Corfield, G 2016, Pers. comm., 15 March). In addition to the existing verification checks professional journalists undertake when testing the accuracy of content, Walker says *The Guardian* journalists have been trained in online verification techniques since the England Riots. He says: "…we have had some semi-formal training on the various techniques you can use to verify whether something posted on YouTube or Twitter or

[another platform] might actually be what it is" (Walker, P 2016, Pers. comm., 12 April). The process of checking the veracity of social media texts is now a common task for a professional journalist, but in 2011 the idea of using content shared on social media platforms in crisis reporting was still evolving. In the almost 10 years since that crisis a number of new platforms to share content, and verify it, have come and gone, with fact-checking tools and methods continuing to evolve as the technology does. Journalists need to stay on top of such technology through formal training within their newsrooms, or through their own endeavours, to ensure their techniques remain valid.

Using social media for news tips

Social media is like a modern version of the way journalists previously heard about police operations by using scanners in newsrooms with one major difference: the public nature of social networks. Twitter's relevance as a news tipping service and news source had become evident via a series of events, including the Hudson River plan crash, that preceded the peaceful protest outside Tottenham Police Station that escalated to riots in London. This section answers the research question relating to the significance of social media texts as news sources during crisis events, illustrating the importance of Twitter for *Guardian* journalists during the riots and Rigby's murder. As Ball and Lewis explain, "News that a protest over the police shooting of Mark Duggan had descended into violence was being passed along a chain of thousands of Twitter users before journalists had even arrived at the scene" (2011). With so many people sharing information about the riots through retweets, Twitter became a vital tool to inform professional journalists and the public alike. As Ball and Lewis explain further:

> The England riots were a seminal moment for Twitter. With mainstream media organisations often struggling to keep up with the fast-moving and unpredictable spread of the unrest, millions of people turned to the social networking site for information. (2011)

Twitter played an important role as a news source and sharing medium during the England Riots, but took on an even more vital role as a coordination tool for the clean ups afterwards. In studying how and why organisations use social media, Schlagwein and Hu highlight "dialogue" as a prime reason, as in "The use of social media for multidirectional dialogue and communication" (2017: 199). Using Twitter to coordinate the riot clean-up is a clear form of organisers engaging with a small, passionate audience to achieve a common goal. This practice is discussed later in this section.

News reporter Ben Quinn was one of many journalists in the *Guardian* newsroom monitoring tweets and BlackBerry messages about violent outbreaks around London to see how the story was unfolding, where the hot spots were and the developing conversations that should be followed up. However, as the riots developed social media texts became more than a research tool. This information started to steer the rolling coverage of the riots on *The Guardian*'s live blog. Quinn says:

> The tweets were basically directing leaders that were on our live blog, but it was more important than that really. They were being embedded into our live blog. There's a really wide variety of stuff that we were just learning and finding our way to see how that could really be maximised in terms of covering our story. (2016)

McIntosh says Twitter offered vital information at speed as the riots broke, making it a valuable source of information. He says the real-time Twitter news feed was a boon during the riots:

> It was essentially like a news wire… And the extraordinary thing was that you're watching it in a newsroom alongside a news wire… Twitter was constantly outperforming, it was telling

> us stuff far quicker than other sources. Of course it wasn't all true, so we had to verify stuff, but we were getting a feel for is the story real, what's actually happening, do we believe something's happening? (2016)

Social media platforms were tracked to pinpoint the hot spots for riot activity throughout London and in other English cities. Both Quinn (2016, Pers. comm., 25 February) and Walker (2016, Pers. comm., 12 April) comment on the importance of tracking social media platforms, like Twitter and BlackBerry Messenger, to get a fuller picture of the action. McIntosh's, Quinn's and Walker's insights show *Guardian* journalists used Twitter for tips and guidance on where to concentrate their reporting during the riots. Walker says, "…for the most part, particularly for something that's as confusing as the riots, we just use tweets as kind of guidance. We'd much rather have somebody down there who we could ring and they say, 'I'm there and this is taking place'" (2016, Pers. comm., 12 April). Quinn followed online trails on Twitter and BlackBerry Messenger (BBM) to research where he should focus his reporting. As he explains, "You just needed a pretty good idea of where clusters of people were gathering. And maybe, in some cases, actually it looked like a back channel working much better than the police themselves" (Quinn, B 2016, Pers. comm., 25 February). Quinn points out that an original tweet would not be taken as fact unless the Twitter user had been contacted by DM (direct message) or telephone to confirm the information.

This additional level of checking shows the continued flow of journalistic standards, no matter where the information has been sourced from and no matter how fast the story is moving. Oliver says, "It's really important to remember that just because these texts are on a different channel or a different platform, we still need to apply the same journalistic rigour to them" (Oliver, L 2016, Pers. comm., 17 May). However, if the person who published the tweet cannot be contacted, and thus the information cannot be confirmed, the tweet can still

be helpful because "it's still useful to know any potential gaps for guidance wherever something is happening or what's going on" (Quinn, B 2016, Pers. comm., 25 February). With social media acting as an indicator that there is a story to be investigated, testing and verifying the information becomes the next imperative. As Walker says, social media enabled journalists to keep on top of many riot sites at once:

> [During] the London riot, you obviously had riots in lots of different places and you had new instances of trouble breaking out all the time and it could be as few as 30 or 40 youths who'd be causing it, so there was absolutely no way of keeping track on where everything was taking place. So you had to use social media an awful lot. (2016)

Acting as a tool that alerted journalists that something was happening and keeping abreast of what is happening at multiple sites is the strength social media brings to a crisis, rather than being the broadcaster of facts. Walker says, "The really important thing you had to do was just to make sure that you just use it as a kind of alert service, rather than something that actually told you what the truth was, because it's a very unreliable thing, from a crisis point of view" (2016, Pers. comm., 12 April). The unreliability of content sourced from social media platforms is discussed further later when the rumours that circulated online during the England Riots is presented.

The fact that *Guardian* journalists were scanning Twitter at the time of Rigby's 2013 attack confirms the microblogging platform was more than a social networking tool for the media; it was an additional news alert service. This occurrence illustrates how Twitter's usefulness for traditional journalists had shifted, but also how the practice of using social media as a news source had evolved. Malik spoke about the platform's relevance for journalists at the time of Rigby's death. He says: "At that time, especially… Twitter was the central medium for breaking news events" (Malik, S 2016, Pers. comm., 25 March). *The Guardian* news

journalists used Twitter as a guide to show them which leads to investigate for the Rigby attack story, as well as a cross-referencing tool to back up what they already knew (Quinn, B 2016, Pers. comm., 25 February). As with any breaking news story, there was a frantic scramble to find the facts of the Woolwich attack in as little time as possible and social media was one of the primary sources used. Quinn says: "We were trying to find information in any way possible and [with] every tweet you've got to verify it as accurate" (Quinn, B 2016, Pers. comm., 25 February). Real-time updates on social media platforms alert users to the crisis event itself, and then fill the news vacuum that exists immediately afterwards, but before traditional journalists arrive at the scene. These conditions reflect the important role social media plays in the lives of so many around the world, but also how it has become part of the journalistic practice in crisis reporting. Searching social media for information had become one way of tracking a breaking story. As Walker explains, "if you're trying to track something down, then, for the most part, social media is one of the things that you do" (Walker, P 2016, Pers. comm, 12 April). *Guardian* live blogger Sparrow used social media to follow how politicians responded to Rigby's attack and fed those comments into his blogs on the story (Sparrow, A 2016, Pers. comm., 8 April). Higgins operates in a similar way, using social media updates as research for his Brown Moses blog posts on the Syrian civil war. The blogger sourced videos posted about the Syrian conflict and cross-referenced them to verify dates and events before posting (2016, Pers. comm., 7 June; Reid 2014).

Higgins, who established citizen investigative journalist platform Bellingcat[29] after successfully operating as live-blogger Brown Moses during the Arab Spring, developed open source investigation techniques for people interested in sharing and publishing information about conflicts around the world. After studying the patterns on social media, Higgins

[29] bellingcat.com

developed a method whereby he used collections of tweets to show when something was happening. He says, “Individually, [these scattered tweets] meant not too much, but when they were brought together that gave a picture that there was something going on there” (Higgins, E 2016, Pers. comm., 7 June). Higgins saw a number of social media videos posted online in May 2012 during the Syrian conflict and traced these to the Houla Massacre. He live-blogged what he was seeing online, which was then picked up news organisations internationally. His close study of the material regarding the Houla Massacre led him to an understanding of how citizens were using social media to share what was happening in Syria. Higgins says, “I realised the way social media was being used in Syria was in quite a systematic fashion because local towns and cities would have three or four social media accounts because they didn’t generally have a lot of internet access” (2016, Pers. comm., 7 June). Once Higgins discovered how social media was used by those with access to the limited accounts he built a list of the relevant accounts and checked these daily. This meant he was often the first to see, and share, the amateur content, which is why Brown Moses became a trusted source for legacy media outlets.

Journalists use social media frequently to research their stories, but not just for covering big events like a crisis. Social media is also a direct news source for any news story, Walker explains. He says: “If it’s a statement by an organisation or somebody well known, then you can just directly report that tweet, because that’s just like a quote” (Walker, P 2016, Pers. comm., 12 April). Publicly posted material, like a tweet, has become an important source because it can be accessed easily and quickly (Brandtzaeg et al 2016), which Bruno calls “the Twitter effect” (2011: 7). Sparrow explains why Twitter has become such a vital tool in crisis reporting:

> [Tweets are] very good because often they’re the fastest texts or news sources you can get and

> now, because so many journalists and other people are on Twitter, then you get good quality material there too. So, if you're doing instant news, which is something people who write blogs and also broadcasters do, then they're a kind of indispensable news source. (2016)

As good as social media is at helping those tracking a fast-moving news story, the positive of speed can be outweighed by the need to wade through a lot of meaningless (to the journalist) information to find the newsworthy gems. As James points out, this can go awry when social media is relied on too heavily. He says: "One function of mainstream media journalism is to disseminate information we've determined to be reliable… But the reliance on Twitter and Facebook is essentially throwing the doors open to everything and anything" (James 2009). Even when keywords and hashtags are used to find information relevant to a particular topic (Messina 2007; Xiao 2014), such searches can still hinder journalistic research by finding too many updates or information that is too general to be of use (Sparrow, A 2016, Pers. comm., 8 April). As Carvin notes, "As soon as a hashtag reaches a certain level of popularity, it gets overrun with spam and irrelevant tweets" (2012: 34), which contributes to the overflow of information Sparrow mentions.

Professional journalists often turn to social media platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, during a crisis to track down those involved, or at least find out more information about the story's subjects (Hermida 2012). However, Facebook's messaging settings can make finding that information difficult, as the platform sends messages from non-friends as "message requests", which are housed in a separate folder, therefore need to be searched for separately so the user might not know about the message until much later if they are not in the habit of checking that folder frequently (Facebook 2016). Walker was using Facebook to find Adebolajo's and Adebowale's friends after Rigby's attack. He explains the problems he, and other journalists, face when using the platform this way:

> You're having to do searches on Facebook send messages to people saying, 'I can see from your message that you knew one of the lads. Would you want to chat?' That's quite tricky to use because often Facebook messages from non-friends go to a different inbox, so it can be quite hard to get to people in that way. (Walker 2016)

When time is a factor, as it is when reporting on a breaking news story, relying on a service that may or may not be checked is not ideal for a newsroom. What *Guardian* journalists Walker and Sparrow (2016, Pers. comms., 8 and 12 April respectively) experienced while using social media platforms as an information source for their crisis reporting has been repeated for professional journalists around the world. Further to this, their *Guardian* colleague Paul Lewis (2011) had similar difficulty when relying on social media users to check messages when he travelled the country to report on the riots. Operating within the tension between timely reporting within a never-ending news cycle and the need to find real-time information is a balance that professional journalists have come to understand.

Not only was social media a breaking news source alerting the world to what had happened to Lee Rigby in Woolwich in 2013, but is was also the space where journalists could find vital details to put together a picture about the attackers Adebolajo and Adebowale and their lives. This speaks to the influence that social media texts have on the quality of *The Guardian*'s journalistic outputs. Walker (2016) says there was a frantic period of online researching in the days after Rigby's murder, when social media really came into its own as a source. He says:

> …everyone was trying to track down details about the two young lads who carried out the crime, and the way that the British legal system works is there's this kind of window before people are formally charged with a crime. [Afterwards] there's very little you can write until the end of the trial. (Walker 2016)

This scramble for information included finding out where they lived and speaking with

nearby residents because, "…some former neighbours had tweeted, which gave us a clue of people to talk to" (Walker, P 2016, Pers. comm., 12 April). Walker says he was, "…literally, turning up on doorsteps, knocking on doors, chatting to neighbours, trying to find people who knew them because they'd lived in various flats. There was a flat in Greenwich they spent a lot of time at, and the family home" (Walker, P 2016, Pers. comm., 12 April). This type of reporting harks back to a practice Walker says he undertook 20 or 30 years ago when door knocking or speaking over the phone were the primary methods used to source information. However, in 2013, the leads Walker followed to discover which doors to knock on for the Rigby story came from social media.

These same social networking platforms provided a virtual police scanner for journalists covering the Rigby crisis. Quinn says he and his colleagues were tracking Twitter closely to keep on top of the story (2016, Pers. comm., 25 February). He says, "…but even when we were still used to picking up and answering twitters, for example, there were people talking about individual police movements in a critical area, or the beginnings of trouble in a particular area" (Quinn, B 2016, Pers. comm., 25 February). Publishing such potentially sensitive information in a public space, like social networks, can interfere with police operations and open up other legal issues. The legal ramifications of sharing police operational information and intelligence via social media was also a factor during both the Mumbai terrorist attack in 2008 (Oh et al 2011), which happened before Rigby's death, and the Sydney Siege in 2014 (Archie 2015). Archie writes about how social media affected events during the Sydney Siege, explaining "…imagery and information during a police operation published on Twitter can be accessed by perpetrators… shifting the tactical advantage to the terrorists" (2016: 20). As seen through these research interview examples and other crisis events, the ease of accessing social media networks and publishing sensitive

information on those networks opens up questions around the legality of publishing intelligence that could be part of an ongoing police operation.

The negative side of social media

After five days of reporting on the England Riots via Twitter, *The Guardian* journalist Paul Lewis had an additional 35,000 followers on that platform (Lewis 2011). Those chasing numbers would be impressed by that feat, but the experience was not a wholly positive one for the reporter. Lewis was live-tweeting what he was seeing in front of him, but in the heat of the riots some of his reporting was taken out of context and used to fan the (ideological) flames. Lewis tweeted what he called a "minor skirmish" involving around 70 Caucasian men running down a street yelling, "get the Pakis" and "get the blacks". He explains how this tweet was misinterpreted and the situation got out of hand:

> …my reports quickly became viral and, taken out of context, were being used to stoke fears of imminent racial conflict… It was a sobering reminder of the power of social media. The streets were in chaos, but so too was the internet, which was both the fastest source of reliable news and, unchecked, a means of spreading panic. (Lewis 2011)

Lewis suddenly found himself the unwitting source of a false report, which shows how quickly information can spread via social media and how easily it can be misrepresented.

There is no doubt the public forum of concerned citizens on Twitter were motivated to help their communities post riots, as seen through the *Guardian*'s *Reading the Riots* analysis on #riotcleanup, however that same investigation also found another purpose for Twitter during the riots: as a place for rumours to both breed and die. One part of the *Reading the Riots* report was a study on how rumours were spread on Twitter, including the point of beginning

for the rumour, where and how it was spread, and how it was confirmed or denied (Guardian Interactive team et al 2011). Analysis of the data showed Twitter became the best way to communicate during the riots – for good and bad (Richards and Lewis 2011). During the unrest itself, the microblogging network was used to knock down wild rumours. When tweets appeared declaring a tiger was loose in the exclusive London suburb of Primrose Hill and that the London Eye was alight, Twitter was even more effective as a tool to dismiss these rumours than one to broadcast them. In Richards' and Lewis' words: "Despite helping rumours spread at great speed, Twitter has an equal and opposite power to dispel them – often in the space of two or three hours, particularly if the counter-evidence is strong" (2011). Another tweeted rumour accusing rioters of storming a McDonald's to cook their own food was also debunked, but not before it was reported by *The Daily Mail* on 8 August (Gallagher and Farrell 2011).

Both Twitter and traditional media outlets were integral when it came to confirming or denying the rumours during the England Riots. Vis explains how this worked: "The role of the mainstream media is evident in some of these rumors (for example outright debunking them, or indeed confirming them quickly as news), as is the corrective nature of Twitter itself in terms of dealing with such rumors" (2012: 88). When rumours gain traction online and are disseminated by hundreds, or thousands, of social media users, another complication is often added to the mix: unnecessary promotion of the non-story. Bates says, "…one of the more worrying features of use of social media in spreading information, misinformation and dubious sources of information, is expanding and exploding a story, which otherwise would have been contained" (Bates, S 2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). McIntosh also argues that the rumours circulating on Twitter during the riots came at a cost to those covering the story. He says:

> Social media has come to occupy a fairly central role in breaking news generally. It has to be used with a degree of caution because there are always questions around verification… we lost time in the London riots where people were sharing misinformation on social media and to verify some of the reports that were completely false. People were doing that almost maliciously. (McIntosh 2016)

His comment about "malicious" behaviour echoed that of Corfield's when he mentioned people sending him false reports during his riot reporting. Following on from the time cost McIntosh mentions, Walker says the rumour mill on Twitter proved to be the downfall for some media outlets during the riots. However, this scenario also showed where the information gaps were for future reference. Walker explains:

> Quite a lot of other newspapers and TV stations were trying live-blogs and a lot of them weren't particularly experienced then… so there were a lot of people who were reporting things because they saw them on Twitter, and it turned out to be not true. We were better than some, but even then, we learnt quite a few lessons on how to verify stuff. (2016)

Additionally, *The Guardian* used the experience to formulate its verification standards for social media texts. The *Reading the Riots* researchers found photographic evidence – even when it was obvious the photograph had been edited – was a key factor in convincing Twitter users of the veracity of the tweet and associated image (Richard and Lewis 2011). This point was echoed by Corfield (2016, Pers. comm., 15 March) and Walker (2016, Pers. comm., 12 April) earlier in this chapter, with both confirming that they took more notice of tweets about the riots that contained photographic or video evidence to confirm what the user was saying. The ease of publishing on social media – both fact and rumour – and associated tools to edit photographs and videos make these platforms an easy target when it comes to laying blame for the spread of such information. However, like the issues of journalist safety in crises, this is not a problem that has surfaced with such technology, rather the volume of people publishing on social media makes it more apparent.

Ethics: publishing graphic content

Smartphones that allow people to take and share photographic and video footage of an event can be a "valuable source of material of what is going on", Bates says, but there are ethical considerations that must be acknowledged when publishing such material (2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). He says social media is "an important news source", but adds that, "while mobile film footage can illustrate and illuminate an incident, of course it can also manipulate it and distort it" (Bates, S 2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). Another thread within the ethical argument around social media texts is deciding whether or not to use contributed material taken by eyewitnesses at a crisis event. Day mentions that many of the texts submitted after the London bombings were considered by editors "...so graphic as to render them unusable..." (2005), which was again mentioned by Oliver (2016) in relation to texts from Rigby's death. An eyewitness will view a graphic scene without being selective, whereas as a professional journalist or photographer would depict the same scene in a way that illustrates the narrative in an engaging way for their audience, all the while adhering to the editorial parameters set by their outlet. Indeed, Anden-Papadopoulos and Pantti make the point that "…journalists know to mediate and mitigate suffering in the form of meaningful compositions, whereas amateurs capture suffering without the sense of storytelling…" (2013: 968). Judgement must always be exercised when it comes to publishing appropriate and acceptable content for readers in such circumstances. Bates says, "[c]learly you have to report the fact that some of these terrible things have happened. But you can't then show them without disturbing and distressing images being shown and disseminated" (2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). Besides it being one of the first available images of the London bombings, another of the reasons Stacey's photo from Dennen's blog received such traction around the world is that it was a photo of how the subject himself was affected by the

bombings. There was no blood, injury or death to be seen, but the grainy image was powerful in its claustrophobic framing and lighting. It was a simple image, taken quickly as Stacey and his fellow passengers escaped the blast site, but it spoke to millions. It is the professional journalist's ability to not only tell the story of the unfolding crisis, but to also analyse the factors contributing to the event that separates them from amateurs who report as eyewitnesses.

Guardian journalist Laura Smith was working on obituary stories for bombings victims after the 2005 London terrorist attack. Smith was tasked with finding anybody who knew those who had died in the attacks, and to find out as much as possible about the victims. In a pre-Facebook age this meant Smith was scouring electoral rolls and early social media friend-finding platform Friends Reunited[30], which has since closed. Friends Reunited had banks of images posted by users which were used, along with comments from their pages, by traditional media outlets to build profiles on bombings victims (Smith, L 2016, Pers. comm., 1 March; Honingsbaum 2005). Smith says she "...used comments that were posted by the victims' friends and family members on *The Guardian* site" (Smith, L 2016, Pers. comm., 1 March). This practice shows an early example, along with the use of blog comments and photos, of journalists using social media platforms for research and source material. It also shows insight into professional journalists' ethical decisions around the use of such content when choosing which texts to use and which to leave out.

User-generated content has been used to inform and illustrate reports presented by traditional journalists on multiple occasions, but the publishing of amateur graphic and political content raises many ethical questions. These questions include how much of the contributed content

[30] friendsreunited.com

to publish, the appropriate time to publish it, whether it is too graphic to publish on the front page and if the material should be accompanied by a warning. When the additional factor of having to make these decisions around publishing graphic content have to be made on the spot because the event is changing quickly, it can lead to an ethical minefield for professional journalists and editors. When it came to the Rigby attack, for instance, media outlets had to weigh up whether to broadcast the video in which Adebolajo defended his act of terrorism while still holding the bloodied knife he had used to murder Rigby – and how much of it should be shown, if they did broadcast. These ethical decisions are also being made in parallel with the discussions around media inciting and justifying violence (Nikhilesh and Reyes 2018; Hutchison, Salvatore and Whitten-Woodring 2016). As Bates explains:

> In the case of the killing of Lee Rigby, that raised several professional ethical dilemmas in that the video was partly produced by the murderers themselves. Now no British national media showed the extent of Lee Rigby's injuries but virtually everyone showed the one of his murderers addressing the camera to try and justify what he'd done. (2016)

Those in newsrooms around England, and the world, had to use their editorial judgement when deciding how much to show of a terrorist attack where a man was murdered in public on a busy shopping strip in Woolwich, London, on a weekday afternoon. The additional factor at play in the Rigby case, for professional journalists, was the knowledge that much of the content had already been broadcast online via multiple social media accounts before they published the story. These questions illustrate an ethical dilemma that has evolved over many years of journalism: how much graphic content to show. There was a time, pre-internet, when many newspaper journalists and editors probably would not have published photos of Adebolajo speaking to camera, bloodied knife still in his hand. Instead, the print story would have been illustrated with Adebolajo's arrest (Bates, S 2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). Bates explains:

> There've been horrific photographs over 100 years now and news organisations have to use their judgement about what is appropriate [and] acceptable to their audience or their readership to show… There are times when you just can't show things because they are too hideous, such as beheadings, and there are some times when it actually can be considered [reasonable] to show terrible images. (2016)

It must also be noted, that what is deemed inappropriate by readers of *The Guardian* may be considered suitable for another publication, and vice versa. To shed some more light on this point, *The Guardian*'s head of photography, Roger Tooth, gave some insight into how he decided which images to use when illustrating the MH17 crash scene in the Ukraine. Tooth says:

> …there are hundreds [of photographs] that we would not choose for publication because they are either deeply shocking, insensitive to human dignity, would be painful if seen by relatives or friends, or ultimately run the risk of forcing readers to turn away from the story, which would negate the purpose of photojournalism. (2014)

Further to this, Tooth (2014) goes on to discuss some of the ethical points already presented in this thesis, such as the media's role is portraying violent acts and the public's right to know about those acts. He says:

> And there are deeper issues that we, as picture editors, have to wrestle with. Might we be doing the victims a disservice if we do not publish such hard-hitting photographs? If you had died a violent and unjust death, wouldn't you want the world to know all the details surrounding that death? On the other hand, in showing those images, are we perhaps feeding a propaganda machine and fuelling more conflict? (Tooth 2014)

Another factor at play in today's media space is the speed at which information about crises is published. This point has already been discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to both London bombings and England riots case studies, but it has been presented again here because Rigby's death shows breaking stories are no longer just the domain of the victims, police, a handful of witnesses and the media; breaking news stories are a moveable feast.

Reports of Rigby's death were broken on social media (Malik 2016), highlighting the ability for anyone to record and publish information from the scene of a crisis event, such as a soldier's murder. This means any event has the potential to become a major story within minutes. Deadlines are now more frequent and fluid with online versions of stories published at any time on masthead websites, blogs and social media accounts. In addition, a publication's online readership can span continents, rather than a city or regional area. Where a once-daily print deadline meant journalists had hours to research and write a story, now crisis reporters publish breaking news and subsequent updates online before the final version of the story appears in print. Bates explains how this impacted the decision-making process within a 2016 newsroom:

> These days you don't have very long to make a decision… national boundaries are no longer enough to shield the public because if you're not publishing an image, someone else, somewhere else very well might be and your readership, your public can see that if they choose to look it out. (2016)

When social media texts were a new news source, media professionals had to develop guidelines around their use on the fly (Bates 2016), whereas newsrooms now have guidelines around the use of such texts (Duffy and Knight 2019). Describing *The New York Times*' updated social media guidelines as a policy "to guide newsworkers through the difficult intersection of traditional journalism and social media", Duffy and Knight explain that guidelines around digital content should combine "enthusiasm for social media with a guarded concern at the dangers they bring, along with reminders of the essential values of the publication, and exhortations to maintain them" (2019: 932).

Guidelines aside, though, the speed at which traditional journalists and news producers have to make decisions about when and how to publish a breaking story has always presented

ethical issues. Media professionals are under pressure to make a decision about how their outlet will present developing stories, like a crisis. Professional journalistic practice is to verify content before publishing, but in a breaking news situation that is not always feasible. Should there be a distinction made in journalism around presenting different types of stories considering the time pressures in reporting breaking news events versus a human interest feature article? Training goes some way to prepare traditional journalists and editors to present the story professionally, but years of experience covering similar crises, and understanding their readership's attitudes towards such stories guide their judgement in these situations. The 24-hour news cycle and the always-on nature of the internet and social media demands fast decisions when it comes to how each story is packaged, but the same ethical standard is expected for each story, no matter what its subject matter. In Bates' words: "These days, you now have a few minutes. But the ethical and the professional principles you need to deploy are essentially the same" (2016).

A fast-moving event also presents opportunities for professional journalists to shape the story being told. Images and video content already posted online does not necessarily need to be rebroadcast by traditional media outlets. Instead of presenting the same story as what is being told via social media, crisis reporters can tell the story from a different angle with deeper explanation, added analysis and alternative points of view. The human desire to tell others when something dramatic happens has already been mentioned earlier in this chapter, but the Rigby case illustrates that impetus perfectly. An off-duty soldier was stabbed by two men before a street-full of eyewitnesses. Some of those witnesses instinctively recorded the event. In Baker's words: "...this is how news stories happen now: split-second decisions; a hunger for drama; a desire to share opinions and witness accounts instantly to be part of the action" (2015: 145). Participation by the members of the public who were on Wellington Street,

Woolwich, that day extended beyond sharing the event on social media to complicity in the attack itself. As Walker explains, "The key thing at the time was the video/mobile phone footage that people had shot at the scene, including one of the killers talking to camera," (Walker, P 2016, Pers. comm., 12 April) which leads to the question: does the act of recording a crime equal consent and, therefore, make the witness an accessory? This argument could be made for the England riots case also covered in this thesis, with Allan (2013) and Eddo-Lodge (2011) both writing about riot-related content being shared by witnesses on social media. While Le Bon argues that such an act may be considered criminal if considered out of context of the event (1947: 160), because the witnesses – or crowd – are acting unconsciously which "makes it difficult to qualify them in any case as criminal" (1947: 160). Whether implied consent is criminal or not, knowledge of an event suggests a level of permission because "you cannot say that you did not know" (Ellis 2000: 11). There is a level of involvement in witnessing such events, but that involvement is arguably still passive because the event happens anyway, despite the involvement of individual witnesses.

The legality of witness complicity aside, there is a vicarious pleasure derived from witnessing a crime, which counteracts the sense of helplessness that arises from witnessing an act of terrorism but not knowing what to do about it (Biressi and Nunn 2003; Rentschler 2004). As Rentschler says, "…people may simply not know how to act or what to do with their vicarious experience of others' suffering, because they have not been taught how to transform feeling into action", however human nature dictates a need to share such an experience (2004: 300). We are hard-wired to share what we see, whether that is through telling another, recording it and sharing it via social media or documenting it in a journalistic sense. In Gregory's words, "…people in crisis are going to talk to other people (and nowadays they are going to film it) even if all the professional guidance in the world tells them not to interview

or to record" (2015: 1382). This point links back to Le Bon's argument that crowds enter a "…purely automatic and unconscious state, in which they are guided by suggestion…" (1947: 160) which would suggest they are acting as a mob rather than thinking through the implications of their actions individually. While the legal system looks more favorably on blank, mechanical witnesses rather than an unconscious, suggestible crowd, making the decision to record something you know is a violent and illegal act indicates a level of awareness about what is happening. Peters argues that such a witness would, "…behave like a thing: a mere tablet of recording" (2009: 33), but this takes humanity and thought out of the act. If the witnesses to Rigby's murder had acted as mechanical witnesses they would not have recorded the crime and the ad hoc press conference that followed it; instead they recorded the crisis unfolding before them knowing that traditional media outlets would want their content and they used that knowledge to share what they recorded with the media.

Social media offers myriad uses during crises

During the England Riots authorities and politicians were quick to lay blame on Twitter, along with Facebook and BlackBerry Messenger, as the space where looters were sharing information about riot locations and inciting violence (Lewis, Ball and Halliday 2011). However, this assumption was not entirely correct. As Hermida explains, "The London riots of August 2011 also showed how social media networks can serve to challenge fabrications. Politicians and police were quick to blame social media for helping to incite and organize the disturbances" (2014: 174). To shed more light on the role Twitter did play in the England Riots, *The Guardian* and London School of Economics published the report *Reading the Riots* (Lewis et al 2011), which looks at both the causes of the riots and how Twitter was actually used during the disturbances. *Reading the Riots* includes an analysis of more than 2.5

million tweets that were pooled from hashtags relating to the riots and their aftermath to better understand the role of social media during the crisis event (The Guardian 2011; Lewis, Ball and Halliday 2011). A research team comprising *Guardian* journalists and academics, led by Professor Rob Procter at the University of Manchester, analysed the tweets. The research team found:

> Contrary to widespread speculation at the time, the social media sites Facebook and Twitter were not used in any significant way by rioters. In contrast, the free messaging service available on BlackBerry phones – known as "BBM" – was used extensively to communicate, share information and plan in advance of riots. (Lewis et al 2011)

The Guardian journalists Ball and Lewis (2011) used this analysis to explain where Twitter factored into the riots and its importance as an information tool: from the news breaking on the social media platforms, through to the riot clean up afterwards.

Allan (2013) says news editors took on the role of curator during the riots, working with news teams to check and verify content and "…moving swiftly to repurpose diverse types of contributions from members of afflicted communities, many of them evidently intent on doing their part to extend the scope of mainstream coverage" (Allan 2013: 141). Twitter became a trusted information source during the riots, which led to confusion about how the social media platform was being used during the crisis.

Despite the government wanting to shut down access to Twitter during the riots (Ball and Lewis 2011), fearing it was how users were spreading news about where to gather, Eddo-Lodge (2011) argues Twitter was not being used in that way. Rather, she explains, citizen journalists took to the microblogging platform to explain what was happening around them. She distinguishes between the differing roles Twitter and BlackBerry Messenger played

during the riots: “While Twitter spread fast-moving news, BBM spread statements and pictures that documented criminal activity” (Eddo-Lodge 2011). The distinct difference between these two networking platforms is access and privacy. This level of connection social media platforms allow forms the foundation needed to share and disseminate a message to a wide audience. Such a foundation is a vital ingredient when publicly rallying participants from many geographic areas, while the strength of the private platform is derived from the inaccessibility to those outside the chosen network – in this case BBM.

The Guardian used data journalism to create a visualisation illustrating how social media factored into the riots (Lewis, Ball and Halliday 2011). While data from the 2.5 million tweets studied after the riots highlights that, “… Twitter was mainly used to react to riots and looting… It also reveals how extensively Twitter was used to co-ordinate a movement by citizens to clean the streets after the disorder” (Lewis, Ball and Halliday 2011; Vis 2012). This level of online mobilisation had been seen less than a year before during Arab Spring uprisings where activists:

> …had learned to use all the tools of social media—blogs, email, Facebook and Twitter—to articulate political claims, co-ordinate the actions of different groups and organise demonstrations. Social media also played an important role in bridging civil and political society to shape and cultivate a new type of urban citizenship. (AlSayyad and Guvenc 2015: 2025)

However, back in England, once the five days of civil unrest had died down, groups of community-minded citizens turned to social media to organise clean ups in the riot locations. Allan explains that these groups used specific hashtags on social media in their search for volunteers:

> …social networks were being pressed into service to help mobilise public responses, with #riotcleanup and #riotwombles on Twitter and Facebook’s ‘Post riot clean-up’ pages proving useful to assemble volunteers to begin the slow work of rebuilding devastated communities.

(2013: 145)

The social media users behind the post-riot clean up accounts proved very popular in the crisis aftermath. *The Guardian*'s Datablog published a list of the 200 most influential Twitter accounts during the riots (Evans and Vis 2011). Interestingly, the top account was @riotcleanup, which was established to encourage people to help clean up their communities after the riots. Lewis's Twitter account was second, and the rest of the top 10 comprised media accounts (BBC, ITV, *The Guardian*, Piers Morgan), a lawyer, actor Simon Pegg and the Greater Manchester Police's account. Datablog also published the top hashtags used on Twitter during the riots (The Guardian 2011). The top 10 tags were: "londonriots", "riots", "ukriots", "riotcleanup", "Tottenham", "manchesterriots", "enfield", "birminghamriots", "hackney" and "Manchester". This list of hashtags shows users were tweeting mainly about the riots themselves (a combined total of 1.8 million tweets), but there was also a significant number of tweets about cleaning up the mess left afterwards (200,000 tweets) and the locations of riot sites.

Recording and reporting on the England Riots were not the only uses for social media platforms during this crisis event. In her research on social media, Baker (2012) notes the ubiquity of such networking platforms during the England Riots meant people who would not normally connect found commonality, and a shared cause, which had both positive and negative effects on the developing situation. Baker says: "A notable effect of new social media was that these mediums engendered a sense of social cohesion by connecting actors from disparate geographies into a common symbolic space" (2012: 175). Baker paints social media as a significant contributor to the event by saying: "…these instant, mobile forms of communication inexorably contributed to the speed and scale of the riots…" (2012: 169).

Some users turned to social media to congratulate and hero the rioters. Looters posed for photos with the goods they had stolen and these photos were then shared via social media platforms (Daily Mail Reporter 2011). Police used CCTV footage, Flickr, Facebook and Twitter to identify looters, with many of these 'hero' photos providing the evidence they needed to charge offenders (Daily Mail Reporter 2011). Twitter was one of the platforms where these looting photos were shared but use of the microblogging platform during the riots mainly centred on users retweeting others' tweets, which amplified the content (Ball and Lewis 2011). While the impact of social media on the England Riots was viewed by politicians, police and commentators as negative, research by Ball and Lewis (2011) in the aftermath of the riots shows that is only one side of the story. The platform was also used by residents to say they had made it home safely during the crisis, debunk rumours and organise clean ups after the riots. These arguments are two sides of the same opinionated coin, adding further evidence to the need for balanced reporting, especially in crisis situations where the situation changes so quickly.

As a news organisation, *The Guardian* was an early adopter to using social media content as a means of sourcing information, stories and within crisis reporting. However, the real test for the news organisation was when it started embedding such content into its live coverage, Oliver says:

> [Social media] are a fantastic resource that can provide incredible insight, eyewitness accounts, a flavour and a tone to the story that we wouldn't otherwise get as journalists [and] immediacy to our coverage that we might not have unless we happen to be in the wrong place at the right time. (2016)

When bushfires swept through southern Tasmania, Australia, in January 2013, PhD candidate Melanie Irons started a Facebook page to help connect people during the crisis. The public

page quickly became a focal point for those trying to find out information about the bushfires and those who wanted to offer help, food or other necessities. Irons says the speed of social media during the crisis meant information was often contradicted and had to be updated constantly. She says, “the problem with disaster events is that they’re so ambiguous and fluid and ever-changing and new information comes to light all the time”, but then adds, “being able to keep pushing out information as it’s happening, being as close as you can to real time, is a real benefit” (Irons, M 2016, Pers. comm., 8 April). Irons shows that even in the midst of a crisis, when information is coming from multitudes of sources, it is still vital to communicate and be able to share updated information as close to real time as possible. On the other side of this scenario, professional journalists want the facts in real time and the ability to verify those facts with the person sharing the information.

How journalists use social media to report on crises

The case studies presented in this discussion section outline how social media is used as a news alert service, information and news source, a communication tool and even a publishing platform, showing how journalistic practice has evolved through such platforms. Walker finds social media to be an easy shortcut when it comes to sourcing official statements. He says, “[Before social media] they would just issue a statement to the Press Association. Now they will quite often update an official Facebook page and send out a tweet from an official account” (Walker, P 2016, Pers. comm., 12 April). When it comes to finding information fast in a crisis, social media takes on multiple roles. This starts “as an early warning system to tell you what’s going on and where” Quinn says, and adds that social media can be used “as a way of contacting and finding people in the crowd and a guide for what’s going on” (Quinn, B 2016, Pers. comm., 25 February). For a journalist, this early alert can be critical in getting

the initial threads of the story. As Quinn explains, “In any office, any newspaper room in the UK, the reporters have got [Twitter browsing interface] Tweetdeck open on their screens. AFP and Reuters are still used, but Twitter’s rapidly eclipsing them as the sort of go to first source for finding out” (Quinn, B 2016, Pers. comm., 25 February).

Sparrow also relies on Tweetdeck as his top news source, using Twitter lists of people, regions, topics and events that he will check regularly and search using key words and terms when a story breaks (Sparrow, A 2016, Pers. comm., 8 April). Like Quinn, Sparrow considers Twitter is the key platform for breaking news, but finds this network is used less by members of the public so he also checks Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram as needed (Sparrow, A 2016, Pers. comm., 8 April). When asked, Walker also put Twitter at the top of his source list, but additionally uses Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Vine. He explains that online networks can be both witnessing and tip off tools: “[Social media] can be a way for witnesses at a scene to pass stuff on because… there will inevitably be someone at the scene with access to a smart phone and social media… It’s a way for non-professional news gatherers to contribute to the story” (Walker, P 2016, Pers. comm., 12 April). *The Guardian* has also used Twitter to pose questions to experts and generate vox populist debates on specific topics and published the tweeted responses the following day (Broersma and Graham 2013: 456, 459). As a news source, social media can be significant, especially when information is limited as is often the case in the first moments of a crisis. In this situation, “…any sources of information that a journalist can get to inform, illustrate and illuminate a subject are important” (Bates, S 2016, Pers. comm., 23 February). However, social media texts can also be rendered unusable because of their potentially harmful content due to their too-graphic nature, or that they present potential legal ramifications.

Like many journalists reporting on the violent events in England in summer 2011, Paul Lewis used information gained from social media in his stories, further illustrating the significance of social media texts in *The Guardian*'s crisis reporting. Lewis, whose work on the riots has been referenced above, and his *Guardian* colleague Mustafa Khalili, travelled to various locations throughout England over five days to record the riots and their aftermath (Lewis 2011). Lewis was even given information about the riots from three teenagers on bicycles who recognised him from his tweets: "One looked at me and said: 'Bruv, you the man from Twitter?' He said he had been following updates from journalists about the riots, and told us to head to Edmonton Green, where there was a plan to attack shops at midnight" (2011). In referencing how his colleague was able to report the way he did on the event, Bates argues that it was social media's flexibility that gave Lewis the opportunity to cover the riots:

> Paul Lewis made his name in the *Guardian* from the agility with which he used social media and news in the few days when the riots were occurring around the country. He criss-crossed the sites of England, and I think the Midlands, to cover these things, almost as soon as they were happening. (2016)

Lewis used Twitter (@paullewis) as the first place to publish his reports because of the platform's immediacy and the ability to communicate with many at once. He (Lewis 2011) explains the thinking behind this decision: "The first portal for communicating what we saw was Twitter. It enabled us to deliver real-time reports from the scene, but more importantly enabled other users of Twitter to provide constant feedback and directions to troublespots". Even just a few years before the riots broke in 2011, journalists tasked with reporting on crises still chased ambulances to find out where the hotspots and stories were (Lewis 2011). However, the number of sources on social media and the duo's ability to move easily between these locations meant Lewis and Khalili were able to track the riots via what social media users were telling them.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the England Riots were incredibly violent and, at times, out of control. This crisis presented a safety threat to the police, residents and onlookers, the rioters themselves and the journalists reporting on the crisis. The situation Lewis found himself in represents a change not only in how crisis events had come to be reported with the aid of social media texts, but also the public attitude towards those reporting the events. These attitudes were both positive and negative. On one hand, the public guided journalists to riot locations and contributed content they had recorded, but on the other hand, some journalists cited safety issues when reporting from the front lines of the riots. Lewis made the decision not to overtly present himself as a journalist and dressed like those in the crowd. He says: "Khalili and I were pretending to be part of the crowd, with hoodies pulled tight over our heads" (Lewis 2011). Staying safe while working on the riots story became more important as the crisis escalated. Lewis says, "Some rioters turned on people taking images on mobile phones. I saw one press photographer pulled to the ground and beaten with sticks" (Lewis 2011). *The Guardian* reporting duo of Lewis and Khalili instead opted to blend in, and this won sources and supporters alike.

Other journalists also used Twitter to post updates of the riots as they were happening, both for safety reasons and ease of use. *New York Times'* London reporter Ravi Somaiya "…was on the ground covering the unfolding story of the London riots, posting updates on Twitter from early on Saturday night when looting and violence broke out in Tottenham" (cited in Kemp and Turner 2011). Like Lewis and Khalili, Somaiya worked carefully to ensure his safety in such a volatile situation. He says the rioters' aggression made it difficult to use the standard journalism tools of the trade, such as a notebook and pen, so using his phone and social media surreptitiously was a safer option. He says, "The rioters didn't like being photographed for obvious reasons, so I had to be subtle about the way I went about it" (cited

in Kemp and Turner 2011). Somaiya's secretive reporting highlights why Twitter became such an important tool for journalists during this crisis:

> I don't think that you could have covered this for television. For TV you have to have a crew, a camera, a broadcast truck, a presenter. In those circumstances – where there were no police to be seen – it wouldn't be possible for it all to be protected. It was difficult enough for me to send Tweets and discreetly take photographs on my phone. In many ways it was a story made for Twitter. (cited in Kemp and Turner 2011)

Press Association photographer Lewis Whyld put his camera gear in his car after another photographer was attacked, instead choosing to document the riots with his smartphone. Whyld's decision meant he could continue to cover the riots safely, but also get the content back to the newsroom with minimal equipment. Allan explains how this worked on a practical level:

> His professional equipment safely stowed in his car, [Whyld] continued documenting the carnage around him using his Blackberry mobile phone, which also enabled him to relay the images to the newsroom without having to use his laptop. Several of them would duly appear in newspapers around the world. (2013: 139)

The issue around safety and the use of social media to publish information about an event is apparent in crises around the world, which adds further to the reasons for legacy media to use contributed content from people at the scene. Journalists covering the Syrian conflict, which began in March 2011 just months before the England Riots, also reported in risky and dangerous circumstances. Foreign media is not allowed in some parts of the country, or it is deemed too unsafe for journalists to be there, making content contributed by citizens vital to covering the story. Johnston discusses the Syrian conflict in relation to BBC's changing newsroom practices:

> While journalists do still report across parts of the country, UGC is a vital storytelling tool, particularly where there are no journalistic 'boots on the ground'. It could be footage of the aftermath of barrel bombing in Homs, or of the airstrikes in Idlib, which was distributed by

> media activists at the end of last year. These individuals are no longer just citizens but have become 'produsers' – both users and producers, and identifying what can, or should, be used from these sources. (2016)

Of course the safety of journalists is not a new consideration, as war correspondents would attest, however the advent of social media and the technology that enables the public to broadcast via these platforms has opened up opportunities for untrained participants to engage in crisis reporting. Social media had become a useful news alert tool and reporting medium for some traditional journalists reporting on the England Riots, but the safety of journalists was not the only negative associated with reporting during this event. Putting the obvious workplace safety issues aside for journalists reporting at violent events, there is also an argument for not asking for the public to supply content of the same events if it endangers them or others. Welsh (2007) describes her horror at eager citizen journalists filming a car burning at Glasgow Airport, showing the extent to which these amateurs would go to can be harmful. She says:

> When the burning car careered into Glasgow's terminal one building and the police were attempting to arrest the suspects, these "citizens" did not go and help the authorities. They put themselves in grave danger, without regard for their safety or the safety of those around them. (2007)

Taking the safety issue further, after footage of the arrest of two terror suspects was sold to *ITV News* and the *Daily Mail* after the London Bombings, the UK Chartered Institute of Journalists wrote to the Press Gazette expressing member opposition to media outlets inviting the public to participate in reporting (Van Dusseldorp 2005). The institute wrote:

> …attempts by television channels to actively encourage their viewers to go out and get news pictures and then transmit he results direct to them, are totally unacceptable and border on the irresponsible. These TV companies deserve condemnation for their outrageous demands and their disregard for the danger they may be subjecting their viewers to in their attempt to obtain picture material. (cited in Van Dusseldorp 2005)

In writing about how the "BBC has gone from passively accepting user-generated content to positively soliciting it" Boaden (2008) argues that additional content can enrich journalism and broaden the diversity of voices, but she also warns media "not to encourage citizen journalists to take risks in dangerous situations". The same safety considerations must apply for professional and amateur journalists alike, but this issue does pose questions around the ethics of accepting contributed material that has been recorded in unsafe situations. Are media outlets liable for contributors' physical and mental safety after the fact if they publish such content?

Conclusion

Three case studies have been presented in this discussion section, showing the impact of social media texts on *The Guardian*'s crisis reporting between 2005 and 2013. The London Bombings in 2005, England Riots in 2011 and Lee Rigby's murder in 2013 show an evolution in the social media platforms available for use, public involvement in reporting on crisis events and how journalistic practice has developed when it comes to using social media texts within crisis reporting. The key themes of speed, verification and journalistic ethics run through each of the three crisis events studied within this project, forming a common thread of issues affecting professional journalists who undertake crisis reporting.

The ubiquitous nature of social media and people's constant online connection via smartphones means that anyone can post texts online, without consideration for how it might affect some in their wider network. Editors have always walked the fine line between what is acceptable to publish based on editorial direction and readership, with their understanding of

what meets that criteria derived through experience, training and legal guidance. Amateur reporters do not have this level of support or training and often respond in the heat of the moment when a crisis strikes by sharing something with their networks before considering the full implications of such action. Once the texts have been published online it is very difficult to put the genie back in the bottle, so to speak, which leads to the topic of censorship. Crisis events, and the texts produced to report on those occasions, inevitably lead to editorial conversations around censorship because such events depict violence, suffering, injury and sometimes death. Consider the debate around broadcasting Adebolajo's press conference while he was still holding the knife used to kill Lee Rigby. Some media outlets came under fire because the video of Adebolajo was broadcast on the 6pm evening news and online. Months late, after the Boston bombings, the same questions around how much the media should show to tell the story were debated again.

Crisis reporting in the 2000s is not like crisis reporting 50 years ago, or even 20 years ago. Some of the film Zapruder shot of Kennedy's assassination was censored, deemed too horrific to be broadcast at the time. That footage has since been published online and can be found easily, with Bates commenting that society's standards towards viewing such content has evolved as much as the tools used to publish it. Societal attitudes towards graphic content is more accommodating now, but there is still a line when it comes to what is appropriate to publish and somebody has to make that decision. For all the positives associated with using social media during crisis reporting, there are still many negatives that have to be weighed up by professional journalists such as what is true, what can be verified and what is appropriate for the audience.

Looking at how crisis reporting will continue to evolve and the impact of social media on that

process, it should be pointed out that two of the most common devices used by journalists and the general public alike – smartphones and tablets – did not exist just two decades ago. The tools and apps available on such devices make creating content so simple that it is likely participatory journalists in the future will be using more audio-visual content and embedded video. New social media platforms will be developed and those currently in use will either be updated or fall by the wayside as more relevant platforms make them obsolete. As a result, social media policies and verification guidelines for media outlets will need constant revision. More platforms in a similar vein to GuardianWitness or CNN's iReport will make it even easier for members of the public to be involved in news production but, equally, this presents opportunities for professional journalists to tap into the public's knowledge about an event and the content produced.

Some social media platforms that are now used daily by journalists to keep up to date on what is happening, as well as for research, sources and even reporting, did not exist at the time of the first case studied for this project in 2005. Social media platforms and the tools used for reporting will continue to evolve beyond the final case outlined here, which happened in 2013. Data sourced from newspaper articles published by *The Guardian*, professional journalists and social media users in relation to the London Bombings, England Riots and Lee Rigby's murder shows the important role social media texts play in crisis reporting. This role empowers citizens to play an active part in reporting on crisis events and enables professional journalists to approach crisis reporting from alternative angles, using different voices to tell a more in-depth story.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Social media texts are a vital, yet flawed, resource when it comes to traditional news reporting on crisis events. It has been more than a decade since the London bombings, where this thesis began, and news reporting has evolved to the point where it is now accepted that user-generated content (UGC) will inevitably feature within media coverage about a crisis event. We have already seen a number of subsequent events where social media texts have been used by journalists from media outlets around the world to help in their crisis reporting. These include the Mumbai terrorist attacks in 2008, England Riots in 2011, the Boston bombings and Lee Rigby's murder in 2013, the Sydney Siege in 2014, Charlie Hebdo incident in 2015 and the recent murders of Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 and George Floyd in 2020. Crises present such a situation – where there is no other way to tell the story – because of their very nature as confusing, fast-moving and emotive events where information is scant. It was this situation that prompted news organisations to solicit and use pictures taken by witnesses – such as the one that emerged from the collaboration between Stacey, Ward and Dennen – as alternative points of truth in lieu of professional reporting to cover the developing story. That same situation was repeated again when the public reported from the scene as riots broke out in several locations around England in 2011, and again when a soldier was murdered on a London street in front of shoppers in 2013. Arguably, it is unlikely that those amateur reporters collecting content on these three events intended it for mainstream news outlets, but wanted to share it with their own networks via their preferred social media platforms. However, by engaging in participatory reporting during crises, they opened up opportunities for journalists from *The Guardian* to seek out and incorporate such texts received from eyewitnesses into professional reportage. Studying these events of the past to investigate how they shaped and redefined journalistic practice at *The Guardian*

provides crucial insight into contemporary responses to crises.

Social media platforms that came to popularity between 2006 and 2011, such as Twitter and Facebook, played a prominent role in the reporting of the 2011 England riots as both a news and information source, but also as a reporting tool. Rioters (Kalter 2011), participatory journalists (Corfield 2016) and professional journalists (Lewis 2011) took to social media platforms to share their reports, with an audience eager for more detail. Social media and messaging platforms were also used to share riot locations throughout the country, with politicians calling for some platforms and services to be banned in the wake of the riots and police scanned texts to single out troublemakers to interview and, potentially, arrest (Lewis, Ball and Halliday 2011). However, the role social media played extended to rumour debunking as the riots spread throughout England, as well as being used to mobilise riot clean up teams in various locations. These findings disrupt the narrative central to much reporting at the time that social media was responsible for the rioting (Lewis, Ball and Halliday 2011; Allan 2013; Hermida 2014). However, if social media is to be given agency, it is also responsible for the ability to correct untruthful reporting and coordinate the riot clean up. The *Guardian* journalists and editors interviewed in this thesis also reflected upon how social media could be used to report on events and source breaking news, in addition to the way crisis reporting had changed the processes newsrooms now use to report on crisis events and, even, how new verification methods have developed to check contributed texts for accuracy. Factors spanning the relevance of social media in iterative media coverage, ethical reporting practice and evolving verification methods all play a role in effective crisis reporting which, by its niche and urgent nature, effects change within traditional journalistic practice as a whole.

By 2013, when soldier Lee Rigby was murdered in London, a matter of weeks after the Boston Bombings, amateur reporting from the scene of a crisis had become an accepted practice. In fact, it was so ingrained in the public psyche that onlookers recorded the actions of Rigby's attackers via words, photos and video and then shared these texts on social media platforms. Like other events before, such as the Hudson River plane crash in 2009, news of Rigby's death broke on social media, but there were two significant differences about this case: the confessional press conference recorded post murder, and the fact this recording was purchased and broadcast by mainstream media later the same day (Winston 2013). Social media texts about Rigby's death that were used by legacy media outlets to tell that story showed headlines about major crisis events were no longer only forthcoming once journalists had collected and verified enough information to publish reports; crisis reporting was on demand via Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Data analysis and interviews conducted for this thesis between the London bombings and Lee Rigby's murder show social media platforms, and amateur participation in news production via those platforms, has reduced the breaking news timeline in a crisis from hours to minutes. This has sped up the professional news production process in terms of journalists sourcing content online, but also opened up the need for another level of verification and authenticity checks of social media texts. *The Guardian* embraced the use of amateur social media texts during crisis, and general news, reporting earlier than many other legacy media outlets, even establishing a UGC portal in GuardianWitness to foster and encourage participatory reporting.

This thesis researched three crisis events where social media was a factor in *The Guardian*'s reportage for each, with each case viewed through the lenses of speed, verification and ethics. Arguably, these three themes have always been a factor in journalism, with media outlets priding themselves on being first to break news after it has been checked for accuracy, while

operating within the bounds of an accepted professional code of ethics. However, the more recent iterations of these three elements, brought about by the influence of social media, shows that speed of information dissemination becomes a greater factor during crises. Amateur content shared to social media and found via trending algorithms enables information to be collated and republished by traditional media quickly. Spikes in the use of social media texts within *The Guardian*'s media coverage, as demonstrated through the social media text counts by case (see Appendix 2), dropped from days to hours in the time between the London bombings in 2005 and Lee Rigby's death in 2013. The research interviews conducted for this thesis revealed a changing media landscape, where a search of what was trending on social media became the quick go to source for information about a crisis and indicated where to focus journalistic efforts. Additionally, journalistic checks have evolved further since 2016, when the research interviews were conducted, with verification of social media texts moving beyond online searches and mapping tools, to additional levels of checks and tools developed specifically for that purpose (Veglis and Panagiotou 2018). Ethical journalistic practice to present fair and balanced reporting has also evolved through social media's influence to continue beyond journalists accepting material sourced online at face value to interrogating digital texts and triangulating information gleaned, as well as protecting people's right to privacy and a fair trial.

Studying media events within the recent past, as I have for this thesis, gives insight into the continuing evolution of journalistic practice since the advent of social media. Using social media texts to enhance news reporting has evolved to what is practiced in newsrooms today where journalists have social media platforms open constantly, watching for what is trending online and following those leads. The eight-year snapshot captured within the three cases contained in this thesis shows the change in journalistic practice at *The Guardian,* from

testing the waters of social media text use in crisis reporting through necessity during the London bombings, to actively seeking sources via social media platforms during the England riots, and using that contributed content to build iterative versions of crisis storytelling in the media coverage of Lee Rigby's murder. Social media texts have undeniably become part of *The Guardian*'s newsroom practice, with this thesis showing the significance of such texts in the newspaper reportage, as well as how their use within crisis reporting has evolved over eight years. Through the content analysis of news articles during each of the three case studies and the research interviews with professional journalists, I identified the social media platforms most used at *The Guardian*. The most prominent platforms are Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. In addition, the data gleaned from interviews with professional journalists and editors shows how social media texts had been utilised during the three crisis events: to track potential story events, to source contacts and material published digitally that could be added to news stories, to fact check, and, at times, to report the unfolding crisis itself.

What set the London bombings apart from earlier crisis events, such as the September 11 terrorist attacks and the Indian Ocean earthquake, was the volume and speed at which the public's images and videos taken in the train tunnels and at the bus bomb site were shared and published – some of those texts published as victims were still being rescued from the sites. This contributed content was posted online by participatory journalists themselves via blogs, bulletin boards and emails, but also by their friends and family members and the legacy media outlets to which the amateurs had sent their material within minutes of the bomb blasts (see, for example, Dennen 2005; Douglas 2006). Once the practice of including social media texts – such as amateur photographs, videos and blog posts – in crisis reporting was established during the London bombings, it continued to develop and evolve. This development can be traced via *The Guardian*'s reportage during the England riots and Lee

Rigby's murder, with the number of contributed texts sourced and used increasing in number during the later crisis events. The type of texts used by journalists also changed, with contributed photos and personal reflections of the London bombings making way for the tweets, BlackBerry Messenger texts and videos that factored into riot coverage; followed by tweets, videos and photographs used to tell the Rigby murder story. As participatory journalists became more adept at telling stories from the scene of crises, so too did the way journalists sourced, checked and utilised that content in their crisis reporting, with additional angles, deeper storytelling capacity and constantly developing verification methods the result.

Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated the importance of understanding how the evolution of journalistic practice in a crisis contributes to present and future practices in the context of reporting. Research data provided from *The Guardian*'s professional journalists and editors provides unique insights from those working on the front line into the thinking behind editorial decisions made during the coverage of each event, but also illustrates how crisis reporting guidelines and favoured tools have developed over time. Where once photographs and footage of the crisis aftermath would have been used to illustrate the story, crisis reporters now use contributed content sourced from social media platforms to show how the crisis is unfolding, often as it is still happening. Social media users' comments and insights, gained during research interviews, provide a deeper understanding into the reasons for sharing crisis content on social media platforms, as well as why they would contribute those texts to traditional media outlets. Together, this perceptive interview data provides a deeper explanation of the news article data gained through analysing *The Guardian*'s evolving crisis reporting, such as how the publication's journalists source and verify the social media texts or which platforms they favour during a crisis. These insights contribute to the developing knowledge and research around the symbiotic relationship that has developed

between traditional media and participatory journalists during crisis events.

Research data contained within this thesis demonstrates there is an important role for social media to play within the practice of professional journalism. Indeed, when information is hard to find and confirm in breaking news situations like a crisis, social media updates from those at the scene become more important than ever. By choosing to investigate one media outlet – *The Guardian* – over an eight-year period, this thesis paints a historical picture of the development of social media text incorporation within crisis reporting at that outlet, but also allows us to have a better understanding of the ethical frameworks that professional journalists using such texts must engage with. Studying one publication's response to these conditions also allows for deeper understanding around how the governance and culture of that organisation influenced the response of its editorial staff to the growth in social media text use. Distilling that knowledge further by looking at *The Guardian*'s media coverage through the lens of crises showed how social media users act instinctively and contribute content to legacy media outlets when faced with a major event, and then the specific steps that publication's journalists took to source and verify information about that event within the bounds of 24-hour news deadlines.

A crisis is a microcosm from which an understanding of social media's impact on journalism can be extrapolated. Both traditional and participatory journalism have a place in the wider sphere of media, with this thesis proving how texts produced by each type of journalist inform and add context to the other. Indeed, this thesis shows there is space for both amateur and professional crisis reporting, with the quality of the resulting product generally increased. Participatory journalists' use of social media to share their personal experiences during a crisis does not replace trained journalists researching an event and then providing analysis on

its impact within their reportage. Using social media texts as news sources contributes to the unfolding story, rather than detracts from it, leading to more rounded, deeper and faster reporting, which is particularly important during a crisis situation. Social media platforms and the texts published on those platforms are simply some of the many tools traditional newspaper journalists use to research and tell the news, with these texts relied on more heavily in breaking news situations.

The evidence above shows the role of traditional journalists and media organisations have evolved from telling what has happened after the event to using their own research, eyewitness insights and submitted content to report on crises as they unfold. An analysis of *The Guardian*'s articles published on each crisis traced how the journalistic practice of incorporating social media texts into crisis reporting evolved over time. These insights were interrogated and explained through the rich data uncovered in the research interviews with the publication's professional journalists and editors and social media users. This thesis clearly shows how journalistic attitudes towards the use of social media texts in reporting, and even the platforms themselves, has changed as those platforms have become more sophisticated and news sources evolved. The resulting changes in journalistic practice at *The Guardian* have been mapped, as well as the potential pitfalls of that practice. No longer is the remit of media outlets to simply find and tell the news, but is has developed to be: find, sort, verify and tell the news in the quickest manner possible via multiple platforms, updating facts and sources as they come to hand for an ever-hungry audience, with analysis on why and how, as appropriate.

This thesis also shows that this development in editorial practice has gone even further, with journalists often acting as curators and verifiers of submitted social media content, rather than

being those who break the story. O'Loughlin hints at this scenario by pointing to the trend whereby international wire services "rather than having reporters in every city of the world" to gather information, instead have "fact-checkers and verifiers of social media content" (cited in Sommers 2015). But there is one function of the professional newspaper journalist which has not changed: readers still want someone they consider to be credible to source and present their news, but they reserve the right to choose how and when they consume that news. As Bates contends in his interview, journalists still do what they always did, "which was find an eyewitness and ask them what they'd seen" (2016). The importance of an eyewitness and their capacity to bring narrative form and context to crises is undiminished; the difference now is that participatory journalists report from the scene themselves using a smartphone and their chosen social media platform rather than being interviewed by a journalist. Technology has meant many changes for journalism, but as the collaboration between traditional news media and amateur, or accidental, journalists continues to develop, the role of professional journalists to get into the depths of a story and analyse its impact for an audience fundamentally remains the same.

This study can be used as a base for additional study into the evolution of journalistic practice, and the role social media has to play in that development. Further research could take two directions: in-depth study into social media platform and text assimilation in traditional media newsrooms, or investigating social media text use in covering other crisis events around the world. My thesis indicates a gap in critical understanding of how traditional news media professionals' use of social media as a news source in crisis reporting has evolved, and will continue to evolve, as more platforms are introduced and as legacy media outlets respond to the continually changing industry. While there has been research into how social media has impacted traditional media and its effects on journalistic practice,

the additional factor of social media relevance to reporting during fast-paced and emotive crises has been overlooked. This is where social media shines as both a source for breaking news and ready-made content and a reporting tool. More could be done to study the evolution of journalistic practice and the influence of social media in this space. Social media platforms are now used to disseminate information on a mass scale, and also as reporting tools and even news platforms, but the evolution of crisis reporting at *The Guardian*, and beyond, will continue, and is worthy of further analysis during future crises and as more sophisticated social media technology progresses.

Newsrooms around the world have developed systems and processes to test social media texts and incorporate those texts not only into their crisis reporting, but also general news reporting. However, there is a need to be aware of new social media platforms as they are introduced to gain an understanding about how these platforms can be used within reporting, or not if they present no value to newsrooms. This scenario opens up opportunities for future study into how those platforms are tested for usefulness and also how the processes to use them, and verify the texts published on them, are developed. Such research could lead to iterative social media guidelines for newsrooms on how to report on crisis events using social media texts as news sources and reporting tools at a local and international level. The resulting guidelines will contribute to journalists' and editors' understanding of how social media texts can be incorporated into future crisis, and news, reporting.

Further research could also delve much deeper to the changing nature of journalistic practice outside the three UK crisis case studies covered within this thesis. This could take the shape of researching further crisis coverage by *The Guardian* post 2013, showing how the masthead has continued with its evolution in crisis reporting and digital first practice. Another research

track could be replicating and expanding the methodology used within this thesis to investigate other traditional media masthead's coverage of the same events on a longitudinal basis, while comparing and contrasting how each utilised social media texts to report on the three crises. Moving beyond journalistic practice around social media as news sources, the context that geographic and social factors provide in news reporting during crisis events, and the affect these factors have on such reporting, is another area that could be studied. Either course of study would result in broadening our knowledge into traditional news outlets' use of social media texts in crisis reporting and how these insights can be incorporated into newsroom practice. Such research could also help to answer questions around the future of the newspaper industry and how it can continue to be relevant as a source of news in a digital society.

As a digital-first media outlet, *The Guardian*'s news reporting of three major crisis events between 2005 and 2013 presented an opportunity to explore the practice development around incorporating social media texts into crisis reporting. Data collected via *The Guardian* content analysis gave the foundation for how crises were reported in 2005, 2011 and 2013. Interviews with journalists and social media users explored both sides of crisis storytelling to elaborate on how social media came to be a crisis reporting tool, its strengths and weaknesses as a journalistic news source and how the collaborative approach to crisis reporting developed. This research showed an evolutionary development in journalistic practice when it came to using social media texts. However, it also went further to show that social media texts are incorporated into crisis reporting because they capture eyewitness activity and alternative viewpoints, how texts can be verified, and where social media texts fit into general journalistic practice now, and into the future. Crisis reporting presents the opportunity to show developments in journalistic practice, however it also illustrates that the fundamental

elements of journalism, which are to inform and entertain the audience in an accurate and ethical way, remain the same. The additional factor of social media enhances those fundamental elements by allowing the pace of crisis reporting to speed up, crisis facts to be verified and the story to be published and shared outside traditional newsrooms.

REFERENCES

ABC 2013, 'Thousands stranded as fires devastate Tasmania', *ABC News*, viewed 10 December, 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-01-05/>.

Adam, G 1989, 'Journalism Knowledge and Journalism Practice: The Problems of Curriculum and Research in University Schools of Journalism', *Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol. 14, pp. 70-80.

Adams, D 2016, 'Resistance and persuasion through participatory journalism business models', *Australian Journalism Review*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 101-114.

Adelman, C, Jenkins, D & Kemmis, S 2006, 'Rethinking case study: notes from the second Cambridge Conference', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, pp. 139-150.

Adornato, A 2018, *Mobile and Social Media Journalism*, CQ Press/SAGE, California, USA.

Ahmad, AN 2010, 'Is Twitter a useful tool for journalists?', *Journal of Media Practice*, vol. 11, pp. 145-155.

Albeanu, C 2014, 'Funding New Projects in Collaboration and Verification', *Journalism.co.uk*, viewed 20 July 2014, <http://www.journalism.co.uk/news/night-news-challenge-funds-collaborative-research-and-verification-platforms/s2/a557211/>.

Alexander, D 2014, 'Social Media in Disaster Risk Reduction and Crisis Management', *Science and Engineering Ethics*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 717-733.

Allan, S 2006, *Online News*, Open University Press, Maidenhead, UK.

Allan, S 2007, 'Citizen Journalism and the Rise of "Mass Self-Communication": Reporting the London Bombings', Global Media Journal, vol. 1, pp. 1-20.

Allan, S 2013, *Citizen Witnessing: Revisioning Journalism in Times of Crisis*, Polity, Cambridge.

Allan, S 2014, 'Witnessing in crisis: Photoreportage of terror attacks in Boston and London', *Media, War & Conflict*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 133-151.

Allan, S 2015, ‘Crisis reporting and citizen journalism: 7/7 changed the way we experience news’, *The Conversation*, viewed 12 June 2016, <http://theconversation.com/crisis-reporting-and-citizen-journalism-7-7-changed-the-way-we-experience-news-44369>.

Allan, S 2019, ‘Recovering the real for news photography’, *Journalism*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 126-129.

Allan, S Sonwalkar, P & Carter, C 2007, ‘Bearing Witness: Citizen Journalism and Human Rights Issues’, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 373-389.

Allan, S & Thorsen, E 2014, *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives*, vol. 2, Global Crises and the Media, Peter Lang Publishing, New York, USA.

Allcott, H & Gentzkow, M 2017, ‘Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election’, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 211-236.

AlSayyad, N & Guvenc, M 2015, ‘Virtual Uprisings: On the Interaction of New Social Media, Traditional Media Coverage and Urban Space during the “Arab Spring”’, *Urban Studies*, vol. 52, no. 11, pp. 2018-2034.

Anden-Papadopoulos, K 2013, ‘Media Witnessing and the “Crowd-Sourced Video Revolution”’, *Visual Communication*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 341-357.

Andén-Papadopoulos, K & Pantti, M 2011, ‘Transparency and Trustworthiness: Strategies for Incorporating Amateur Photography into News Discourse’, in K Andén-Papadopoulos & M Pantti (eds), *Amateur Images and Global News*.

Anden-Papadopoulos, K & Pantti, M 2013, ‘Re-Imagining Crisis Reporting: Professional Ideology of Journalists and Citizen Eyewitness Images’, *Journalism*, vol. 14, no. 7, pp. 960-977.

Anonymous 2005, ‘Photograph by Ed Alcock and Alexander Chadwick’, *The Guardian*, 11 July 2005.

Anonymous 2005, ‘Streaked in blood’, *The Guardian*, 8 July 2005.

Anonymous 2005, ‘What the papers say’, *The Guardian*, viewed 22 May 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2005/jul/08/pressandpublishing.terrorism>.

Anonymous 2019, *DrudgeReportArchives.com*, viewed 28 February 2019, <http://www.drudgereportarchives.com/data/2002/01/17/20020117_175502_ml.htm>.

Archie, B 2016, 'Tweeting situational awareness during the Sydney siege', *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 14-29.

Athar, S 2011, *Tweet*, Twitter, viewed 4 October 2016, <https://twitter.com/reallyvirtual/status/64780730286358528?lang=en>.

Babbie, E 2014, *The practice of social research*, Cengage Learning, Boston, US.

Backholm, K, Ausserhofer, J, Frey, E, Larsen, A, Hornmoen, H, Hogvag, J & Reimerth, G 2017, 'Crises, Rumours and Reposts: Journalists' Social Media Content Gathering and Verification Practices in Breaking News Situations', *Media and Communication*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 67-76.

Bainbridge, J, Goc, N & Tynan, L (eds), *Media & Journalism: New Approaches to Theory & Practice*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

Baker, S 2011, 'The Mediated Crowd: New Social Media and New Forms of Rioting', *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 16, no. 4, viewed 1 March 2016, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/16/4/21.html>.

Baker, S 2012, 'Policing the Riots: New social media as recruitment, resistance, and surveillance', in D Briggs (ed.), *The English Riots of 2011: A Summer of Discontent*, Waterside Press, Hampshire, UK, pp. 169-190.

Baker, V 2015, 'Social disturbance: From digital jihadis to hoaxes and propaganda, a look at how user-generated content lost its innocence', *Index on Censorship*, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 143-145.

Ball, J & Lewis, P 2011, 'Twitter and the riots: how the news spread', *The Guardian*, viewed 21 March 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/dec/07/twitter-riots-how-news-spread>.

Barker, G 2015, *The Thread*, USA.

Barnes, C 2012, 'Citizen Journalism vs. Traditional Journalism: A Case for Collaboration', *Caribbean Quarterly*, pp. 16-27.

Barthel, M Mitchell, A & Holcomb, J 2016, 'Many Americans Believe Fake News Is Sowing Confusion', *Pew Research Center*, viewed 15 April 2017, <http://www.journalism.org/2016/12/15/many-americans-believe-fake-news-is-sowing-confusion/>.

Bartlett, R 2011, '"It's gone viral": How a student's riot liveblog brought a million views in a day', *Journalism.co.uk*, viewed 23 June 2016, <https://blogs.journalism.co.uk/2011/08/10/its-gone-viral-how-a-students-riot-liveblog-brought-a-million-views-in-a-day/>.

Baškarada, S 2014, 'Qualitative Case Study Guidelines', *Qualitative Report*, vol. 19, no. 40, pp. 1-25.

Bastos, MT, 2015, 'Shares, Pins, and Tweets: News readership from daily papers to social media', *Journalism Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 305-325.

BBC 2005, 'In-Depth: 7th July 2005 Bombings — What Happened?', *BBC.co.uk*, viewed 25 May 2015, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/uk/05/london_blasts/what_happened/html/>.

BBC 2005, *Londoners' Amateur Footage: 7 July Bombings*, BBC.co.uk, viewed 25 May 2015, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/nolavconsole/ukfs_news/hi/in_depth/uk/2005/london_amateur_footage/bb_rm_default.stm>.

BBC 2011, 'Riots in Tottenham after Mark Duggan shooting protest', *BBC.com*, viewed 1 March 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-14434318>.

BBC News 2013, 'Woolwich machete attack leaves man dead', *BBC News*, viewed 29 September 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-22630303>.

Beaujon, A 2014, 'L.A. Times Reporter Talks About His Story-Writing "Quakebot"', viewed 20 July, 2014, <http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/mediawire/243744/l-a-times-reporter-talks-about-his-story-writing-quakebot/>.

Bebawi, S 2013, 'Arab Spring: New Media, New Journalism, Same Old Tensions?', The Conversation, viewed 20 July 2014, <http://theconversation.com/arab-spring-new-media-new-journalism-same-old-tensions-19662>.

Beckett, C 2011, *The Line of Verification: a guide to social media & objectivity*, 21 January 2011, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2011/01/21/the-line-of-validation-a-guide-to-social-media-objectivity/>.

Belair-Gagnon, V 2012, '"Getting it Right!": How did social media transform BBC News journalism?', *Communiquer dans un monde de normes. L'information et la communication dans les enjeux contemporains de la "mondialisation"*, pp. 234-242, viewed 31 March, 2016, <http://hal.univ-lille3.fr/hal-00839288/document>.

Belair-Gagnon, V 2015, *Social Media at BBC News*, Routledge, New York, USA.

Belair-Gagnon, V, Agur, C & Frisch, N 2017, 'The Changing Physical and Social Environment of Newsgathering: A Case Study of Foreign Correspondents Using Chat Apps During Unrest', *Social Media + Society*, pp. 1-10.

Bell, E 2005, 'Opinion', *The Guardian*, viewed 21 May 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2005/jul/11/media.mondaymediasection>.

Bell, E 2013, 'Commentary All the world's an outside broadcast', *The Guardian*, 24 May 2013.

Bell, E 2015, 'Can Twitter reinvent itself with packaged news before it gets sold?', *theguardian.com*, viewed 23 April 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/oct/18/twitter-reinvent-sale-jack-dorsey>.

Bennett, D 2013, *Digital Media and Reporting Conflict: Blogging and the BBC's Coverage of War and Terrorism*, Routledge, New York, USA.

Bennett, D 2013, *How 'You' have changed the BBC's journalism*, 24 September 2013, BBC, London, UK, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/collegeofjournalism/entries/4768cd77-b5c3-3158-8fe7-7f97950e15be>.

Bentivegna, S & Marchetti, R 2019, 'News Users on Facebook: Interaction Strategies on the Pages of El Paìs, la Repubblica, Le Monde, and The Guardian', *Journalism Studies*, vol. 20, no. 15, pp. 2182-2199.

Berglez, P. 2013, 'Global Journalism and the Digital Web', in Cottle, S. (ed.), Global Journalism: Theory and Practice, Peter Lang Publishing, New York, USA, pp. 105-123.

Bhat, D 2013, 'Police Appeal for Help from Social Media', *The Times*, 17 April, p. p.15.

Bilton, R 2016, 'Reuters built its own algorithmic prediction tool to help it spot (and verify) breaking news on Twitter', *Nieman Lab*, viewed 13 December 2016, <http://www.niemanlab.org/2016/11/reuters-built-its-own-algorithmic-prediction-tool-to-help-it-spot-and-verify-breaking-news-on-twitter/?>.

Biressi, A & Nunn, H 2003, 'Video Justice: Crimes of Violence in Social/Media Space', *Space & Culture*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 276-291.

Boaden, H 2008, 'The role of citizen journalism in modern democracy', *BBC.co.uk*, viewed 25 May 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors/2008/11/the_role_of_citizen_journalism.html>.

Boin, A & 'T Hart, P 2007, 'The Crisis Approach', in *Handbook of Disaster Research*, Springer, New York, USA.

Bouvier, G 2019, 'How Journalists Source Trending Social Media Feeds', *Journalism Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 212-231.

Bowman, S & Willis, C 2003, *We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information*, The Media Center at the American Press Institute.

Boyd, A 2001, *Broadcast Journalism: Techniques of Radio and Television News*, Focal Press, Burlington, USA.

boyd, dm & Ellison, NB 2007, 'Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 210-230.

Bradshaw, P 2011, 'Content, Context and Code: Verifying Information Online', Online Journalism Blog, viewed 26 October 2014, <http://onlinejournalismblog.com/2011/01/26/verifying-information-online-content-context-code/>.

Bradshaw, P & Rohumaa, L 2011, *The online journalism handbook; skills to survive and thrive in the digital age*, Book News, Portland, USA.

Brands, B, Graham, T & Broersma, M 2017, 'Social Media Sourcing Practices: How Dutch Newspapers Use Tweets in Political News Coverage', *Managing Democracy in the Digital Age*, pp. 159-178.

Brandtzaeg, P, Folstad, A & Dominguez, M 2018, 'How Journalists and Social Media Users Perceive Online Fact-Checking and Verification Services', *Journalism Practice*, vol. 12, no. 9, pp. 1109-1129.

Brandtzaeg, P, Luders, M, Spangenberg, J, Rath-Wiggins, L & Folstad, A 2016, 'Emerging Journalistic Verification Practices Concerning Social Media', *Journalism Practice*, vol. 10, pp. 323-342.

Brantlinger, E, Jimenez, R, Klingner, J, Pugach, M & Richardson, V 2005, 'Qualitative Studies in Special Education', *Exceptional Children*, vol. 71, no. 2, pp. 195-207.

Breen, M 1998, *Journalism: Theory and Practice*, Macleay Press, Paddington, Australia.

Brennan, B 2012, *Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies*, Routledge, London, UK.

Broersma, M & Graham, T 2013, 'Twitter as a News Source', *Journalism Practice*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 446-464.

Bruno, N 2011, 'Tweet First, Verify Later? How Real-Time Information is Changing the Coverage of Worldwide Crisis Events', Thesis, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford, United Kingdom, pp.1-77.

Bruns, A 2018, *Gatewatching and News Curation: Journalism, Social Media, and the Public Sphere*, Peter Lang, New York, USA.

Bryman, A 2006, 'Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Research: How is it done?', *Qualitative Research*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 97-113.

Bureau of Meteorology 2014, *Tsunami Facts and Information, Commonwealth of Australia*, viewed 20 August 2014, <http://www.bom.gov.au/tsunami/info/#dec26>.

Buttry, S 2013, *Verification Fundamentals: Rules to Live By*, ed. C Silverman, European Journalism Centre, Maastricht, The Netherlands.

Canter, L 2013, 'The Source, the Resource and the Collaborator: The Role of Citizen Journalism in Local UK Newspapers', Journalism, vol. 14, no. 8, pp. 1091-1109.

Carlson, M, Robinson, S, Lewis, S & Berkowitz, D 2018, 'Journalism Studies and its Core Commitments: The Making of a Communication Field', *Journal of Communication*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 6-15.

Carson, J 2017, 'What is fake news? Its origins and how it grew in 2016', *The Telegraph*, viewed 15 April 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/0/fake-news-origins-grew-2016/>.

Caruana, E, Roman, M, Hernandez-Sanchez, J & Solli, P 2015, 'Longtitudinal studies', *Journal of Thoracic Disease*, vol. 7, no. 11, pp. 537-540.

Carvin, A 2012, *Distant Witness: Social Media, the Arab Spring and a Journalism Revolution*, CUNY Journalism Press, New York, USA.

Chadwick, A 2005, *In pictures: London blasts*, BBC, viewed 28 November 2016, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_pictures/4659489.stm>.

Charles, M & Allan, S 2019, 'Citizen Journalism', in *The International Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies*, John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, USA.

Chatfield, T 2017, 'Fake News', *New Philosopher*, no. 17, pp. 28-31.

Chertoff, M 2017, 'A public policy perspective of the Dark Web', *Journal of Cyber Policy*, vol. 2, pp. 26-38.

Cheung, H 2014, 'Global terror attack deaths rose sharply in 2013, says report', *BBC News*, viewed 6 October 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-30086435>.

Clayton, K, Blair, S, Busam, J, Forstner, S, Glance, J, Green, G, Kawata, A, Kovvuri, A, Martin, J, Morgan, E, Sandhu, M, Sang, R, Scholz-Bright, R, Welch, A, Wolff, A, Zhou, A & Nyhan, B 2019, 'Real Solutions for Fake News? Measuring the Effectiveness of General Warnings and Fact-Check Tags in Reducing Belief in False Stories on Social Media', *Political Behaviour*, pp. 1-23.

Clifton, H 2011, ‘Gloucester: shock and disbelief as sleepy town succumbed to violence’, *The Guardian*, viewed 19 August 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/dec/06/gloucester-sleep-town-violence>.

Cockerton, P 2013, ‘Lee Rigby trial: Handwritten note passed by alleged killer to witness as she comforted dying soldier’, *Mirror*, viewed 29 September 2016, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/lee-rigby-trial-handwritten-note-2866202>.

Colic-Peisker, V, Mikola, M & Dekker, K 2016, ‘A Multicultural Nation and its (Muslim) Other? Political Leadership and Media Reporting in the Wake of the “Sydney Siege”’, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 373-389.

Collins Dictionary 2017, ‘Word of the Year 2017’, *Collins English Dictionary*, viewed 23 October 2018, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/woty>.

Cook, C & Dickinson, A 2014, ‘UK Social Media, Citizen Journalism and Alternative News’, in PJ Anderson, G Ogola & M Williams (eds), *The Future of Quality News Journalism: A Cross-Continental Analysis*, Routledge, New York, USA, pp. 202-223.

Cottle, S 2009, ‘Global Crisis Reporting: Journalism in the Global Age,’ *Issues in Cultural and Media Studies*, Open University Press, Maidenhead, Berkshire, UK.

Cottle, S 2011, ‘Taking Global Crises in the News Seriously: Notes from the Dark Side of Globalization’, *Global Media and Communication*, vol. 7, no. 77, pp. 77-95.

Cottle, S 2012, ‘Journalists Witnessing Disaster: From the Calculus of Death to the Injunction to Care’, *Journalism Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. pp. 232-248.

Cottle, S 2013, ‘Global Crises and the Media’, in Cottle, S. (ed.), *Global Journalism: Theory and Practice*, Peter Lang Publishing, New York, USA, pp. xi-xiii.

Cottle, S 2014, ‘Rethinking Media and Disasters in a Global Age: What’s Changed and Why it Matters’, *Media, War & Conflict*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 3-22.

Cottle, S 2019, ‘Journalism, coming of (global) age, II’, *Journalism*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 102-105.

Creative Commons 2005, *Attribution 2.5 Generic*, Creative Commons, viewed 21 April 2016, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/>.

Creative Commons, 2009, *History*, Creative Commons, viewed 3 March 2017, <https://creativecommons.org/about/history/>.

Cuddihy, M 2013, Twitter.com, viewed 10 December 2014, <https://twitter.com/MartinCuddihy/status/287108021836980224>.

DaheflersPuppets 2013, *Terror Attack In London 2013 machete attack leaves man dead Killer speaks out*, 29 September 2016, Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JW_p5xzyJpg>.

Daily Mail Reporter 2011, 'Twit and Twitter: "Looter" posts photo of himself and his booty online as police say tweets were used to co-ordinate riots', *Daily Mail*, viewed 1 September 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2023667/London-riots-Looter-posts-photo-booty-Facebook.html>.

David, G 2010, 'Camera phone images, videos and live streaming: a contemporary visual trend', *Visual Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 89-98.

Dawes, J 2007, *That the World May Know: Bearing Witness to Atrocity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, US.

Day, J 2005, '"We had 50 images within an hour"', *The Guardian*, viewed 20 May 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2005/jul/11/mondaymediasection.attackonlondon>.

Dayan, D & Katz, E 1994, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*, Harvard University Press, Harvard.

Daymon, C & Holloway, I 2010, *Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxfordshire.

Dee, B 2013, 'Comment: My faith in humanity is strong after Woolwich: Comment & Debate: After witnessing this brutal act, I am resolute that it must not chip away at our foundations of peaceful co-existence', *The Guardian*, 29 May 2013.

Dennen, A 2005, *London Underground bombing, trapped*, 25 May 2015, <http://moblog.net/view/77571/london-underground-bombing-trapped>.

Deuze, M 1999, 'Journalism and the Web', *Gazette: International Journal for Communication Studies*, vol. 61, no. 5, pp. 373-390.

Deuze, M 2005, ‘What is journalism? Professional identity and ideology of journalists reconsidered’, *Journalism*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 442-464.

Deuze, M 2006, ‘Participation, Remediation, Bricolage: Considering Principal Components of a Digital Culture’, *Information Society*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 63-75.

Deuze, M 2007, ‘Convergence in Journalism’, *Buchbesprechungen*, pp. 237-242.

Deuze, M 2008, ‘Understanding Journalism as Newswork: How It Changes, and How It Remains the Same’, *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 4-23.

Deuze, M 2019, ‘What Journalism Is (Not)’, *Social Media + Society*, vol. 5, pp. 87-96.

Deuze, M, Bruns, A and Neuberger, C 2007, ‘Preparing for an Age of Participatory News’, *Journalism Practice*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 322-338.

Deuze, M & Quandt, T 2007, ‘Convergent Journalism. The Fundamentals of Multimedia Reporting’, *Publizistik*, vol. 52, no. 2, pp. 237-237.

Devine, M 2013, ‘Terrorists face media blitz’, *Sunday Telegraph*, 21 April 2013, p. 44.

Djerf-Pierre, M, Ghersetti, M & Hedman, U 2016, ‘Appropriating Social Media: The changing uses of social media among journalists across time’, *Digital Journalism*, vol. 4, no. 7, pp. 849-860.

Dodd, V 2013, ‘Front: Woolwich murder: Adebowale charged’, *The Guardian*, 30 May 2013.

Domingo, D, Quandt, T, Heinonen, A, Paulussen, S, Singer, J & Vujnovic, M 2008, ‘Participatory Journalism Practices in the Media and Beyond’, *Journalism Practice*, no. 2, pp. 326-342.

Douglas, T 2006, ‘How 7/7 “democratized” the media’, *BBC.co.uk*, viewed 25 May 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/5142702.stm>.

Drew, R 2001, *The Falling Man*, Associated Press, New York, USA, 11 September 2001, Photograph, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Falling_Man.jpg>.

Duffy, A & Knight, M 2019, ‘Don't be Stupid’, *Journalism Studies*, vol. 20, pp. 932-951.

Eddo-Lodge, R 2011, ‘Twitter didn't fuel the Tottenham riot’, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/aug/08/tottenham-riot-twitter>.

Ellis, J 2000, *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty*, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London, UK.

England, R 2017, ‘Twitter can detect crime up to an hour faster than police’, *Engadget*, viewed 3 March 2019, <https://www.engadget.com/2017/06/27/twitter-monitoring-crime-riots-faster-police/>.

Evans, L & Vis, F 2011, *200 most influential Twitter users during the riots: are you on the list?*, 8 August 2011, Guardian News and Media Limited, London, UK, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/dec/08/riot-twitter-top-200>.

Facebook 2016, *Which messages will I get in my inbox*, Facebook, viewed 1 November 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/help/427500684120337?helpref=faq_content>.

Facebook 2019, *Secret Conversations*, Facebook, viewed 2 March 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/help/messenger-app/1084673321594605/>.

Fedler, F, Carey, A & Counts, T 1998, ‘Journalism's Status in Academia: A Candidate for Elimination?’, *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 31-39.

Ferrara, F 2005, ‘With Citizens Visual News Coverage Standards Don’t Change’, *Nieman Reports*, no. Winter, viewed 26 May 2015, <http://niemanreports.org/articles/with-citizens-visual-news-coverage-standards-dont-change/>.

Ferrucci, P & Tandoc, E 2017, ‘Shift in influence: an argument for studying changes in gatekeeping’, *Journal of Media Practice*, vol. 18, pp.103-119.

Fitzgerald, B 2005, ‘Creative Choices: Changes to the Creative Commons’, *Media International Australia*, vol. 114, no. 1, pp. 83-86.

Fletcher, R & Nielsen, RK 2018, ‘Generalised scepticism: How people navigate news on social media’, *Information, Communication & Society*, pp. 1468-4462.

Flew, T 2009, 'Democracy, Participation and Convergent Media: Case Studies in Contemporary Online News Journalism in Australia', *Communication, Politics & Culture*, vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 87-115.

Freivogel, W 2019, 'When should justice be outside public view?', *Gateway Journalism Review*, vol. 48, no. 353, p. 24.

Frosh, P 2009, 'Telling Presences: Witnessing, Mass Media, and the Imagined Lives of Strangers', in P Frosh & A Pinchevski (eds), *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, pp. 49-72.

Gallagher, I & Farrell, S 2011, 'Did rock-throwing teenage girl's "beating" by police spark London riots? Pictures that show how Tottenham turned into a war zone', *The Daily Mail*, viewed 1 July 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2023254/Tottenham-riot-Mark-Duggan-shooting-sparked-police-beating-girl.html>.

Gans, J 2017, *News: Live tweeting the High Court*, 25 November, Melbourne Law School, Melbourne, Australia, <https://blogs.unimelb.edu.au/opinionsonhigh/2017/06/27/news-live-tweeting-the-high-court/>.

Garcia de Torres, E & Hermida, A 2017, 'The Social Reporter in Action: An analysis of the practice and discourse of Andy Carvin', *Journalism Practice*, vol. 11, pp. 177-194.

Gayomali, C 2013, '4 innocent people wrongly accused of being Boston Marathon bombing suspects', *The Week*, viewed 29 September 2017, <http://theweek.com/articles/465307/4-innocent-people-wrongly-accused-being-boston-marathon-bombing-suspects>.

Gelfert, A 2018, 'Fake News: A Definition', *Informal Logic*, vol. 38, pp. 84-117.

Gillman, S 2011, 'News Values and News Culture in a Changing World', in Bainbridge, J, Goc, N. and Tynan, L (eds), *Media & Journalism: New Approaches to Theory & Practice*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, pp. 245-256.

Gillmor, D 2003, 'Moving Towards Participatory Journalism', *Nieman Reports*, pp. 79-80.

Gillmor, D 2004, 'We the media: the rise of citizen journalists', *National Civic Review*, vol. 93, no. 3, pp. 58-63.

Gillmor, D 2009, *Mediactive Book*, 12 March 2017.

GNM press office 2011, *Guardian News & Media to be a digital-first organisation*, The Guardian, London, UK, 16 June 2011.

Goggin, G 2006, *Cell Phone Culture: Mobile technology in everyday life*, Routledge, Milton Park, UK.

Gonzalez, J 2012, 'George Holliday, the man with the camera who shot Rodney King while police beat him, got burned, too', Daily News, viewed 10 December, 2014, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/george-holliday-man-camera-shot-rodney-king-police-beat-burned-article-1.1098931>.

Goode, L 2009, 'Social news, citizen journalism and democracy', *New Media & Society*, vol. 11, no. 8, pp. 1287-1305.

Google 2004, *Search Statistics Related to September 11, 2001*, Google, viewed 26 February 2019, <https://archive.google.com/press/zeitgeist/9-11.html>.

Gowing, N 2009, *'Skyful of Lies' and Black Swans: The new tyranny of shifting information power in crises*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford, UK, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Skyful%20of%20Lies%20%26%20Black%20Swans.%20The%20new%20tyranny%20of%20shifting%20information%20power%20in%20crises_0.pdf>.

Gregory, S 2015, 'Ubiquitous witnesses: who creates the evidence and the live(d) experience of human rights violations?', *Information, Communication & Society*, vol. 18, no. 11.

Groot Kormelink, T 2020, 'Seeing, Thinking, Feeling: A Critical Reflection on Interview-Based Methods for Studying News Use', *Journalism Studies*, vol. 21, pp. 863-878.

Guardian Archive 2002, 'History of the Guardian', *The Guardian*, viewed 1 March 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/gnm-archive/2002/jun/06/1>.

Guardian Archive, 'Key moments in the Guardian's history: a timeline', *The Guardian*, viewed 2 July 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/gnm-archive/2002/jun/11/1>.

Guardian, The 2005, 'National daily newspaper circulation February 2005', *The Guardian*, viewed 2 July 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/circulationfigures/tables/0,,1437317,00.html>.

Guardian, The 2011, *Twitter activity during riot time*, Guardian News and Media Limited, London, UK, 8 August 2011, <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1W1nSxhzwcljvCLv2dvGQttNFLQYAHFBGQNxYA21vxss/edit#gid=1>.

Guardian, The 2014, 'ABCs: National daily newspaper circulation December 2013', *The Guardian*, viewed 2 July 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/table/2014/jan/17/abcs-national-newspapers>.

Guardian, The 2015, 'The Scott Trust: a timeline', *The Guardian*, viewed 2 July 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/the-scott-trust/2015/jul/26/a-history-of-the-scott-trust#timelineWrap>.

Guardian, The 2018, 'GuardianWitness is closing – but you can still contribute your stories', *The Guardian*, viewed 3 August 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/help/insideguardian/2018/aug/21/guardianwitness-is-closing-but-you-can-still-contribute-your-stories>.

Guardian Interactive Team, Procter, R, Vis, F & Voss, A 2011, 'How riot rumours spread on Twitter', *The Guardian*, viewed 25 October 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/interactive/2011/dec/07/london-riots-twitter>.

GuardianWitness 2013, *Woolwich terror attack: Eyewitness accounts*, GNM Ltd, viewed 4 November 2016, <https://witness.theguardian.com/assignment/519ce787e4b0371c681f9f66#contribute>.

GuardianWitness 2014, *Floods in Europe: share your images, videos and stories*, Guardian News and Media Ltd, viewed 4 November 2016, <https://witness.theguardian.com/assignment/543bcfb6e4b0cd82a095f4c5?page=3>.

GuardianWitness 2016, *Do you help or work with refugees? Share your stories*, Guardian News and Media Ltd, viewed 4 November 2016, <https://witness.theguardian.com/assignment/57c9691ee4b01f3b278913d0>.

Haas, T 2004, 'Qualitative Case Study Methods in Newsroom Research and Reporting: The Case of the Akron Beacon Journal', in SH Irion (ed.), *Qualitative Research in Journalism: Taking it to the Streets*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., Mahwah, New Jersey, USA, pp. 59-73.

Hall, I & Hall, D 2004, *Evaluation and social research: introducing small-scale practice*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK.

Hamilton, M 2011, *UK Riots: Nine Ways to Use Twitter Responsibly*, viewed 25 October 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/blog/2011/aug/10/uk-riots-responsible-use-of-twitter>.

Harcup, T 2011, 'Questioning the "Bleeding Obvious": What's the Point of Researching Journalism?', *Journalism*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 21-37.

Hari, S 2014, 'The Evolution of Social Protest in Nigeria: The Role of Social Media in the "#OccupyNigeria" Protest', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, vol. 3, no. 9, pp. 33-39.

Harriss, J, Leiter, K, Johnson, S & in Shoemaker, PJ 1985, 'All the Deviance That's Fit to Print: Newsworthiness and Social Change', paper presented to Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Memphis, USA.

Heath, R & Palenchar, M 2009, *Strategic issues management : organizations and public policy challenges*, Los Angeles : SAGE, c2009. 2nd ed.

Heinonen, A & Luostarinen, H 2008, 'Reconsidering "Journalism" for Journalism Research', in M Loffelholz & D Weaver (eds), *Global Journalism Research: Theories, Methods, Findings, Future*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, USA, pp. 227-239.

Heinrich, A 2011, *Network Journalism: Journalism Practice in Interactive Spheres*, Routledge, New York, USA.

Hermida, A 2012, 'Tweets and Truth', *Journalism Practice*, vol. 6, no. 5/6, pp. 659-668.

Hermida, A 2014, *Tell Everyone: Why We Share and Why it Matters*, Doubleday Canada, Canada.

Hermida, A 2015, 'Filtering Fact From Fiction: A Verification Framework for Social Media', in Zion, L and Craig, D (eds), *Ethics for Digital Journalists: Emerging Best Practices*, Routledge, New York, USA, pp. 59-73.

Hermida, A 2019, 'The existential predicament when journalism moves beyond journalism', *Journalism*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 177-180.

Hermida, A, Lewis, S & Zamith, R 2014, 'Sourcing the Arab Spring: A Case Study of Andy Carvin's Sources on Twitter During the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 479-499.

Hermida, A and Thurman, N 2008, 'A Clash of Cultures', Journalism Practice, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 343-356.

Herrman, J. 2012, 'Twitter Is A Truth Machine', BuzzFeed.com, viewed 20 July 2014, <http://www.buzzfeed.com/jwherrman/twitter-is-a-truth-machine>.

Hight, J & Smyth, F 2003, *Tragedies & Journalists: a guide for more effective coverage*, Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma, New York, US, viewed 3 August 2018, <https://dartcenter.org/content/tragedies-journalists-6?section=all>.

Hill, S 2013, 'From J-Phone to Lumia 1020: A complete history of the camera phone', *Digital Trends*, viewed 22 May 2016, <http://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/camera-phone-history/#:cxOb9FCXiN1xTA>.

Hinton, S & Hjorth, L 2013, *Understanding Social Media*, Sage Publications, London, UK.

Hjorth, L, Burgess, J & Richardson, I 2012, 'Studying the Mobile: Locating the Field', in L Hjorth, J Burgess & I Richardson (eds), *Studying Mobile Media: Cultural Technologies, Mobile Communication and the iPhone*, Routledge, New York, USA.

Hofman, W, Reinecke, L & Meier, A 2016, 'Of Sweet Temptations and Bitter Aftertaste: Self-Control as a Moderator of the Effects of Media Use on Well-Being', in L Reinecke & MB Oliver (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Media Use and Well-Being*, Routledge, New York, pp. 211-222.

Holt, K & Karlsson, M 2015, '"Random acts of journalism?": How citizen journalists tell the news in Sweden', *New Media & Society*, vol. 17, no. 11, pp. 1795-1810.

Honigsbaum, M 2005, 'The face of the woman in the mask', *The Guardian*, viewed 9 November 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/jul/12/july7.uksecurity2>.

Houpt, S 2005, 'Citizens of the world, report!', *The Globe and Mail*, viewed 25 May 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/citizens-of-the-world-report/article983297/>.

Hughes, A, Palen, L, Sutton, J, Liu, S & Vieweg, S 2008, '"Site-Seeing" in Disaster: An Examination of On-Line Social Convergence', in *International ISCRAM Conference*, Washington, USA, pp. 1-10.

Hughes, A & Palen, L 2018, 'Social Media in Disaster Communication', in RH, DW & TJ (eds), *Handbook of Disaster Research*, Springer International Publishing, Germany, pp. 497-518.

Hutchison, M, Salvatore, S & Whitten-Woodring, J 2016, 'When the Fourth Estate Becomes a Fifth Column: The Effect of Media Freedom and Social Intolerance on Civil Conflict', *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, vol. 21, no. 2.

Ibrahim, Y 2015, 'Self-representation and the disaster event: self-imaging, morality and immortality', *Journal of Media Practice*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 211-227.

Innes, M, Roberts, C, Preece, A & Rogers, D 2016, 'Ten "Rs" of social reaction: Using social media to analyse the "post-event" impacts of the murder of Lee Rigby', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, pp. 1556-1836.

Innes, M, Roberts, C & Rogers, D 2014, 'Critical Timing', *Police Professional*, pp. 17-18.

Iorio, S 2004, 'Focused Interviews', in SH Iorio (ed.), *Qualitative Research in Journalism: Taking it to the Streets*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc, Manwah, New Jersey, USA, pp. 109-125.

Iorio, S 2004, 'Qualitative Method Journalism', in SH Iorio (ed.), *Qualitative Research in Journalism: Taking it to the Streets*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc, Manwah, New Jersey, USA, pp. 3-19.

ITV News 2013, *Exclusive video: Man with bloodied hands speaks at Woolwich scene*, London, UK, 22 May 2013. Distributed by ITV.

Jackson, N & Madrigal, A 2011, 'The Rise and Fall of MySpace', *The Atlantic*, viewed 2 March 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2011/01/the-rise-and-fall-of-myspace/69444/>.

Jacobson, L 2017, 'The Smell Test', *School Library Journal*, pp. 24-28.

James, F 2009, ‘Which Tweets From Iran Are True?’, *The Two-Way*, viewed 1 November 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwoway/2009/06/which_tweats_from_iran_are_tru.html>.

Johnston, L 2016, ‘How is citizen journalism transforming the BBC’s Newsroom practices?’, *OurBeeb*, viewed 11 September 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourbeeb/lisette-johnston/how-is-citizen-journalism-transforming-bbc-s-newsroom-practices>.

Johnston, L 2016, ‘Social News = Journalism Evolution?’, *Digital Journalism*, pp. 1-11.

Jones, S, Lewis, P & Agency 2013, ‘Terror police make ninth arrest as family pays tribute to fallen “hero”: Armed officers seize suspect in London street Drummer Rigby's widow visits scene of murder’, *The Guardian*, 27 May 2013.

Joseph, R 2018, ‘GUIDE: How to verify images on your smartphone’, *Africa Check*, viewed 2 March 2019, <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/guide-verify-images-smartphone/>.

Josephi, B 2014, ‘From Boom-Time to Doom-Time?’, *Australian Journalism Review*, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 115-117.

Kalter, L 2011, ‘Five websites where citizen journalists are documenting riots in London’, *IJNet*, viewed 2 February 2016, <https://ijnet.org/en/blog/how-london-citizen-journalists-are-using-smart-phones-capture-riots>.

Kallinikos, J 2004, *Farewell to constructivism: technology and context-embedded action*, Oxford, London.

Kalter, L 2011, ‘Five websites where citizen journalists are documenting riots in London’, *IJNet*, viewed 2 February 2016, <https://ijnet.org/en/story/five-websites-where-citizen-journalists-are-documenting-riots-london>.

Kaplan, A & Haenlein, M 2010, ‘Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media’, *Business Horizons*, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 59-68.

Karlsson, M 2011, ‘The Immediacy of Online News, the Visibility of Journalistic Processes and a Restructuring of Journalistic Authority’, *Journalism*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 279-295.

Keith, S, Schwalbe, C & Silcock, B 2009, ‘Images in Ethics Codes in an Era of Violence and Tragedy’, *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 245-264.

Kemp, S & Turner, M 2011, 'London Riots: Journalists Under Attack Share Stories From the Front Lines', *The Hollywood Reporter*, viewed 8 February 2016, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/london-riots-journalists-under-attack-221442>.

Khaldarova, I & Pantti, M 2016, 'Fake News', *Journalism Practice*, pp. 1-12.

Kietzmann, J, Hermkens, K, McCarthy, I & Silvestre, B 2011, 'Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media', *Business Horizons*, vol. 54, pp. 241-251.

Knight, M 2012, 'Journalism as Usual: The Use of Social Media as a Newsgathering Tool in the Coverage of the Iranian Elections in 2009', *Journal of Media Practice*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 61-74.

Knight, M & Cook, C 2013, *Social Media for Journalists*, Sage Publications, London, UK.

Koliska, M & Roberts, J 2015, 'Selfies: Witnessing and Participatory Journalism with a Point of View', *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 9, pp. 1672-1685.

Kolmer, C 2008, 'Methods of journalism research – content analysis', in M Loffelholz & D Weaver (eds), *Global Journalism Research: Theories, Methods, Findings, Future*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, USA, p. p 117.

Krippendorff, K 2004, *Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology*, SAGE Publications, California, USA.

Kristensen, N & Mortensen, M 2013, 'Amateur Sources Breaking the News, Metasources Authorizing the News of Gaddafi's Death', *Digital Journalism*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 352-367.

Krums, J 2009, *Tweet*, Twitter, viewed 4 October 2016, <https://twitter.com/jkrums/status/1121915133>.

Kumar, A 2019, 'Supreme Court on Rafale Papers and Electoral Bonds: One and a Half Cheers for Transparency', *Economic & Political Weekly*, vol. 54, no. 16, pp. 10-11.

Lasica, J 2003, 'Blogs and Journalism Need Each Other', *Nieman Reports*, viewed 15 September 2013, <http://niemanreports.org/articles/blogs-and-journalism-need-each-other/>.

Laville, S, Malik, S & Quinn, B 2013, ‘Woolwich killing: “We saw the meat cleaver. They were hacking at this poor guy”: After the horrific terror attack which left one man dead the suspects stood in the busy street, asked passers-by to take pictures, and stayed until police arrived’, *The Guardian*, 23 May 2013.

Lazaroiu, G 2010, ‘Contemporary Mainstream Web Journalism and the Interactive Nature of the Online News Experience’, *Analysis and Metaphysics*, vol. 9, pp. 101–107.

Lazaroiu, G 2012, ‘Users as Participants in the Process of Making Journalism: The Enhanced Communicative Power of Networked Individuals’, *Geopolitics, History & International Relations*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 143-149.

Le Bon, G 1947, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, Ernest Benn Limited, London, UK.

Lee, F 2006, ‘Poll Reporting and Journalistic Paradigm: A Study of Popularity Poll Coverage in Hong Kong Newspapers’, *Asian Journal of Communication*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 132-151.

Legard, R, Keegan, J & Ward, K 2003, ‘In-depth Interviews’, in J Ritchie & J Lewis (eds), *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, Sage, Delhi, pp. 138-169.

Levenson, E 2015, ‘Reddit’s Find Boston Bombers Thread Moderator Is Full of Regrets’, *Boston.com*, viewed 7 October 2017, <https://www.boston.com/culture/movies/2015/04/11/reddits-find-boston-bombers-thread-moderator-is-full-of-regrets>.

Lewis, P 2011, ‘UK Riots: Paul Lewis's Five-Day Journey’, *The Guardian*, viewed 18 February 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/aug/12/uk-riots-paul-lewis-five-day-journey>.

Lewis, P, Ball, J & Halliday, J 2011, ‘Twitter study casts doubts on ministers' post-riots plan’, *The Guardian*, viewed 2 September 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/aug/24/twitter-study-post-riot-plans>.

Lewis, P, Newburn, T, Taylor, M, McGillivray, C, Greenhill, A, Frayman, H & Procter, R 2011, *Reading the Riots: Investigating England's summer of disorder*, The London School of Economics and Political Science and *The Guardian*, London, UK, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/series/reading-the-riots>.

Lewis, S 2012, 'The Tension Between Professional Control and Open Participation: Journalism and its Boundaries', *Information Communication & Society*, vol. 15, no. 6, pp. 836-866.

Lewis, S, Kaufhold, K and Lasorsa, D 2010, 'Thinking About Citizen Journalism', *Journalism Practice*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 163-179.

Lewis, S & Molyneux, L 2018, 'A Decade of Research on Social Media and Journalism: Assumptions, Blind Spots, and a Way Forward', *Media and Communication*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 11-23.

Lewis, S and Usher, N 2013, 'Open Source and Journalism: Toward New Frameworks for Imagining News Innovation', *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 35, no. 5, pp. 602-619.

Lichterman, J 2014, 'Amnesty International Launches a New Site to Help Journalists Verify YouTube Videos', *Nieman Reports*, viewed 20 July 2014, <http://www.niemanlab.org/2014/07/amnesty-international-launches-a-new-site-to-help-journalists-verify-youtube-videos/>.

Lindlof, TR and Taylor, BC 2011, *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*, SAGE Publications, California, USA.

Loo, E 2010, 'Back to Basics in Journalism Education Amid the Techno Hype', *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, vol. 1, no. 20, pp. pp. 1-7.

Lorenzo-Dus, N and Bryan, A 2011, 'Recontextualizing Participatory Journalists' Mobile Media in British Television News: A Case Study of the Live Coverage and Commemorations of the 2005 London Bombings', *Discourse & Communication*, vol. 5, pp. 23-40.

LSE News and Media 2011, 'Reading the Riots study to examine causes and effects of August disturbances', *LSE News and Media*, viewed 8 February 2016, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/newsAndMedia/news/archives/2011/09/riots.aspx>.

MacGregor, P 2013, 'International News Agencies: Global eyes that never blink', in K Fowler-Watt & S Allan (eds), *Journalism: New Challenges*, Centre for Journalism & Communication Research Bournemouth University, Bournemouth, UK, pp. 35-63.

Machill, M & Beiler, M 2009, 'The Importance of the Internet for Journalistic Research: A Multi-Method Study of the Research Performed by Journalists Working for Daily Newspapers, Radio, Television and Online', *Journalism Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 178-203.

Majchrzak, A & More, P 2011, 'Emergency! Web 2.0 to the Rescue!', *Communications of the ACM*, vol. 54, pp. 125-132.

Mare, A. 2013, 'A Complicated But Symbiotic Affair: The Relationship Between Mainstream Media and Social Media in the Coverage of Social Protests in Southern Africa', *Ecquid Novi*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 83-98.

Marwick, A & boyd, d 2010, 'I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience', *New Media & Society*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 114-133.

Matthews, J. 2013, 'Journalists and Their Sources: The Twin Challenges of Diversity and Verification', in Fowler-Watt, K. and Allan, S. (eds), *Journalism: New Challenges*, Centre for Journalism & Communication Research, Poole, London, pp. 242-258.

McAthy, R 2011, 'Student's riot blog brings in a million views in one day', *Journalism.co.uk*, viewed 23 June 2016, <https://www.journalism.co.uk/news/student-s-riot-blog-brings-in-a-million-views-in-one-day/s2/a545550/>.

McCarthy, S 2012, Twitter.com, viewed May 19 2014, <https://twitter.com/smarimc/status/15818144807414720>.

McEnery, T, McGlashan, M & Love, R 2015, 'Press and social media reaction to ideologically inspired murder: The case of Lee Rigby', *Discourse & Communication*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 237-259.

McIntosh, N 2005, 'Your eyewitness accounts', *The Guardian*, viewed 7 July 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/blog/2005/jul/07/youreyewitness>.

McLinden, C & Barclay, E 2018, 'Australian Media Portrayals of Domestic Terrorism: The Sydney Siege and Parramatta Shooting', *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, vol. 29, pp. 209-225.

McNair, B 1998, *The Sociology of Journalism*, Arnold, London, UK.

McNair, B 2003, 'From Control to Chaos: Towards a New Sociology of Journalism', *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 25, pp. 547-555.

McNair, B. 2009, 'Journalism in the 21st Century – Evolution, Not Extinction', *Journalism*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 347-349.

McNair, B 2017, ‘Fake news – a user's guide’, *The Conversation*, p. 6, viewed 3 July, 2017, <https://theconversation.com/fake-news-a-users-guide-73428>.

McQuail, D 2013, ‘Reflections on Paradigm Change in Communication Theory and Research’, *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 7, pp. 216-229.

Meek, A 2010, *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories, and Images*, Routledge, New York, USA.

Meier, P 2013, *Verily: Crowdsourced Verification for Disaster Response*, Patrick Meier, Washington, US, viewed 20 July 2014, <http://irevolution.net/2013/02/19/verily-crowdsourcing-evidence/>.

Melendez, P 2020, ‘Sole Witness Who Heard Cops Announce Themselves in Breonna Taylor Raid Changed His Story’, Daily Beast, 26 September 2020, p. 1.

Messina, C 2007, *Tweet*, Twitter, viewed 1 November 2016, <https://twitter.com/chrismessina/status/223115412>.

Messina, C 2007, *Twitter hashtags for emergency coordination and disaster relief*, 17 June 2015, FactoryJoe.com, <http://factoryjoe.com/blog/2007/10/22/twitter-hashtags-for-emergency-coordination-and-disaster-relief/>.

Messner, M & DiStaso, M 2008, ‘The Source Cycle: How Traditional Media and Weblogs Use Each Other as Sources’, *Journalism Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 447-463.

Meusburger, P 2009, ‘Milieus of Creativity: The Role of Places, Environments and Spatial Contexts’, in P Meusburger, J Funke & E Wunder (eds), *Milieus of Creativity: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Spatiality of Creativity*, Springer Science + Business Media B. V., Germany, pp. 97-153.

Meyers, O & Davidson, R 2017, ‘Interviewing Interviewers: Collecting, Analyzing and Generalizing from Occupational Life Histories of Journalists’, *The Communication Review*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 277-295.

Mezaris, V 2018, *In VID Verification Plugin*, InVID Project, viewed 24 Aril 2019, <https://www.invid-project.eu/tools-and-services/invid-verification-plugin/>.

Mnookin, S & Hong, Q 2013, *Organize the Noise: Tweeting Live from the Boston Manhunt*, The Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard, viewed 31 August 2013, <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102885/Organize-the-Noise-Tweeting-Live-from-the-Boston-Manhunt.aspx>.

Montagne, R 2006, 'Reuters Retracts Altered Beirut Photo', *NPR*, viewed 18 March 2017, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5625098>.

Morgan, DL 2014, 'Pragmatism as a Paradigm for Mixed Methods Research', in *Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: A Pragmatic Approach*, SAGE Publications, California, USA, pp. 25-44.

Morris, J 2004, 'Textual Analysis in Journalism', in SH Iorio (ed.), *Qualitative Research in Journalism: Taking it to the Streets*, Routledge, New York, USA, pp. 163-174.

Mortensen, M, Allan, S & Peters, C 2017, 'The Iconic Image in a Digital Age: Editorial Mediations over the Alan Kurdi Photographs', *Nordicom Review*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 71-86.

Mosco, V 2009, 'The Future of Journalism', *Journalism*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 350-352.

Muthukumar, R, Ramakrishnan, L & Krishnamacharyulu, CSG 2017, 'Turnaround of BlackBerry', vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 4-21.

Nash, C 2013, 'Journalism as a Research Discipline', *Pacific Journalism Review*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 123-135.

National Health and Medical Research Council, MR 2014, *Risk and benefit*, Australian Government, viewed 10 July 2014, <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/chapter-2-1-risk-and-benefit>.

Nee, R 2019, 'Youthquakes in a Post-Truth Era: Exploring Social Media News Use and Information Verification Actions Among Global Teens and Young Adults', *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, vol. 74, no. 2, pp. 171-184.

Newman, N 2011, *Mainstream media and the distribution of news in the age of social discovery*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford, UK.

Nielsen, R and Schrøder, K 2014, 'The Relative Importance of Social Media for Accessing, Finding, and Engaging with News: An Eight-Country Cross-Media Comparison', *Digital Journalism*, pp. 1-20.

Nikhilesh, D & Reyes, I 2018, 'Media, markets and violence', *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol. 34, no. 11-12, pp. 1032-1047.

Niles, R 2005, 'Did London bombings turn citizen journalists into citizen paparazzi?', *Online Journalism Review*, viewed 8 November 2016, <http://www.ojr.org/050712glaser/>.

Niles, M, Emery, B, Reagan, A, Dodds, P & Danforth, C 2019, 'Social media usage patterns during natural hazards', *PLoS ONE*, vol. 14, no. 2, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0210484>.

North, R 2005, *Kings Cross Bomb – my eyewitness account from the bombed carriage*, 25 May 2015, London, <http://rachelnorthlondon.blogspot.com.au/2005/07/kings-cross-bomb-my-eyewitness-account.html>.

North, R 2007, *Out of the Tunnel*, Friday Books, London, UK.

Nguyen, A & Vu, HT 2019, 'Testing popular news discourse on the "echo chamber" effect: Does political polarisation occur among those relying on social media as their primary politics news source?', *First Monday*, vol. 24, no. 5, viewed 7 December 2019, <https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/rt/printerFriendly/9632/7807>.

O'Neill, B 2015, 'Plague of the Camera Phone Ghouls', *Daily Mail*, 12 August 2015, p. 13.

O'Neill, R 2005, 'Now we're all journalists', *The Age*, viewed 25 May 2015, <http://www.theage.com.au/news/creative--media/now-were-all-journalists/2005/07/10/1120934123353.html>.

Obijiofor, L 2009, 'Journalism in the Digital Age: The Nigerian Press Framing of the Niger Delta Conflict', *Ecquid Novi*, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 175-203.

Oh, O, Agrawal, M & Rao, HR 2011, 'Information control and terrorism: Tracking the Mumbai terrorist attack through Twitter', *Information Systems Frontiers*, vol. 13, no. 33.

Outing, S 2005, 'The 11 Layers of Citizen Journalism', *Poynter.org*, viewed 28 February 2019, <https://www.poynter.org/archive/2005/the-11-layers-of-citizen-journalism/>.

Overholser, G. 2009, ‘What Is Journalism’s Place in Social Media?’, *Nieman Reports*, viewed 20 July 2014, <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/101882/What-Is-Journalisms-Place-in-Social-Media.aspx>.

Owen, P & Urquhart, C 2013, ‘Woolwich attack: aftermath and reaction to killing on London street – as it happened’, *The Guardian*, viewed 4 November 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2013/may/22/woolwich-two-shot-in-police-incident-live-coverage>.

Palen, L 2008, ‘Online Social Media in Crisis Events’, *Educause Quarterly*, pp. 76-78.

Palen, L, Vieweg, S, Sutton, J, Liu, S & Hughes, A 2007, ‘Crisis Informatics: Studying Crisis in a Networked World’, in *Third International Conference on e-Social Science*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, pp. 1-10.

Palmer, J 2008, ‘Emergency 2.0 is coming to a website near you’, *New Scientist*, vol. 198, pp. 24-25.

Pantti, M 2013, ‘Getting Closer?: Encounters of the National Media with Global Images’, *Journalism Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 201-218.

Pantti, M 2019, ‘The Personalisation of Conflict Reporting’, *Digital Journalism*, vol. 7, pp. 124-145.

Pantti, M, Wahl-Jorgensen, K and Cottle, S 2012, *Disasters and the Media*, New York, Peter Lang.

Parmelee, J 2013, ‘Political journalists and Twitter: Influences on norms and practices’, *Journal of Media Practice*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 291-305.

Paulussen, S & Ugille, P 2008, ‘User Generated Content in the Newsroom: Professional and Organisational Constraints on Participatory Journalism’, *Westminster Papers in Communication & Culture*, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 24.

Pavlik, J 2013, ‘Trends in New Media Research: A Critical Review of Recent Scholarship’, *Sociology Compass*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 1-12.

Peat, D 2010, *Toronto Sun*, viewed 19 July 2016, <http://www.torontosun.com/news/canada/2010/02/01/12693856.html>.

Peters, C & Allan, S 2018, 'Everyday imagery: Users' reflections on smartphone cameras and communication', *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 357-373.

Peters, J 2001, 'Witnessing', *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 23, no. 6, pp. 707-723.

Peters, J 2009, 'Witnessing', in P Frosh & A Pinchevski (eds), *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, pp. 23-41.

Pettifor, T & Lines, A 2013, 'Woolwich attack: Horrified witnesses tell how beheaded soldier was hacked at "like a piece of meat"', *Mirror*, viewed 29 September 2016, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/woolwich-attack-horrified-witnesses-tell-1904602>.

Pew Research Center 2014, *Principles of Journalism*, Pew Research Journalism Project, viewed 24 October 2014, <http://www.journalism.org/resources/principles-of-journalism/>.

Phillips, S 2007, 'A brief history of Facebook', *The Guardian*, viewed 22 May 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2007/jul/25/media.newmedia>.

Portnoff, R 2018, 'The Dark Net: De-Anonymization, Classification and Analysis', Doctor of Philosophy thesis, University of California.

Posetti, J 2011, 'The Embedded Audience: Have You Got Your Mojo?', *Rhodes Journalism Review*, no. 31, pp. 8-9.

Potts, L 2014, *Social Media in Disaster Response: How Experience Architects Can Build for Participation*, Routledge, New York, USA.

Preston, P 2005, 'Tide of News that Carried All Before It... Eventually', *The Observer*, viewed 20 August, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2005/jan/02/business.comment>.

Puddister, K & Small, T 2019, 'Navigating the principle of open court in the digital age: The more things change, the more they stay the same', *Canadian Public Administration*, vol. 62, no. 2, pp. 202-224.

Puschmann, C, Bruns, A, Mahrt, M, Weller, K & Burgess, J 2013, 'Epilogue: Why Study Twitter?' in Weller, K, Bruns, A, Burgess, J, Mahrt, M & Puschmann, C (eds), Peter Lang, New York, USA, pp. 425-432.

Qu, H 2013, 'Social media and the Boston bombings: When citizens and journalists cover the same story', *Nieman Lab*, viewed 4 October 2016, <http://www.niemanlab.org/2013/04/social-media-and-the-boston-bombings-when-citizens-and-journalists-cover-the-same-story/>.

Quinn, B 2013, 'Rejuvenated far-right group stages protest outside Downing Street: English Defence League', *The Guardian*, 28 May 2013.

Rainie, L 2001, 'How Americans Used the Internet After the Terror Attack', *Pre Internet*, viewed 26 February 2019, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2001/09/15/how-americans-used-the-internet-after-the-terror-attack/>.

Reading, A 2011, 'The London bombings: Mobile witnessing, mortal bodies and globital time', *Memory Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 298-311.

Reid, A 2014, '4 new ways to use social media for newsgathering', *Journalism.co.uk*, viewed 23 August 2019, <https://www.journalism.co.uk/news/four-new-ways-to-use-social-media-for-newsgathering/s2/a556164/>.

Rentschler, CA 2004, 'Witnessing: US citizenship and the vicarious experience of suffering', *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 296-304.

Richards, J & Lewis, P 2011, 'How Twitter was used to spread – and knock down – rumours during the riots', *The Guardian*, viewed 8 February 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/dec/07/how-twitter-spread-rumours-riots>.

Robinson, S. 2009, 'The Cyber-Newsroom: A Case Study of the Journalistic Paradigm in a News Narrative's Journey from a Newspaper to Cyberspace', *Mass Communication and Society*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 403-422.

Robinson-Jacobs, K 2020, 'Officers in George Floyd's Death Head to Court Friday, Blaming Each Other', Forbes.com, 11 September 2020, p.1.

Roese, V 2018, 'You won't believe how co-dependent they are', in P Vasterman (ed.), *From Media Hype to Twitter Storm*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, pp. 313-332.

Romano, A and Hippocrates, C 2001, 'Putting the Public Back into Journalism', in Tapsall, S. and Varley, C. (eds), *Journalism: Theory in Practice*, Oxford University Press, Victoria, Australia, pp. 166-184.

Rosen, J 2008, ‘A Most Useful Definition of Citizen Journalism’, *Press Think*, viewed 15 July 2013, <http://archive.pressthink.org/2008/07/14/a_most_useful_d.html>.

Rosenbaum, R 2013, ‘What Does the Zapruder Film Really Tell Us?’, *Smithsonian*, viewed October 18, 2018, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-does-the-zapruder-film-really-tell-us-14194/>.

Roulston, K 2014, ‘Analysing Interviews’, in Flick, U (ed), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, SAGE Publications, London, UK, pp. 297-312.

Rusbridger, A 2010, ‘Alan Rusbridger: Why Twitter matters for media organisations’, *The Guardian*, viewed September 6, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2010/nov/19/alan-rusbridger-twitter>.

Rusbridger, A 2018, *Breaking News: The Remaking of Journalism and Why It Matters Now*, Canongate Books, Edinburgh, UK.

Sageman, M 2019, *The London Bombings*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, USA.

Salaverria, R 2005, ‘An Immature Medium: Strengths and Weaknesses of Online Newspapers on September 11’, *The International Journal for Communication Studies*, vol. 67, no. 1, pp. 69-86.

Sambrook, R 2005, ‘Citizen Journalism and the BBC’, *Nieman Reports*, no. Winter, viewed 26 May 2015, <http://niemanreports.org/articles/citizen-journalism-and-the-bbc/>.

Schapals, A 2018, ‘Fake News’, *Journalism Practice*, vol. 12, no. 8, pp. 976-985.

Schlagwein, D & Hu, M 2017, ‘How and why organisations use social media: five use types and their relation to absorptive capacity’, *Journal of Information Technology*, vol. 32, pp. 194-209.

Scott, K 2005, ‘Victims capture unfolding events on mobile phones’, *The Guardian*, viewed 21 May 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/jul/09/july7.uksecurity7>.

Seward, Z 2005, ‘Phones Offer Snapshot Of Terror’, *Forbes*, viewed 22 May 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/2005/07/08/london-camera-phones-cx_zs_0708cameraphone.html>.

Silverman, D 2014, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, SAGE Publications, London.

Singer, J 2012, 'The Ethics of Social Journalism', *Australian Journalism Review*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 3-16.

Singer, J 2014, 'User-Generated Visibility: Secondary Gatekeeping in a Shared Media Space', *New Media & Society*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 55-73.

Singer, J, Hermida, A, Domingo, D, Heinonen, A, Paulussen, S, Quandt, T, Reich, Z & Vujnovic, M 2011, *Participatory Journalism: Guarding Open Gates at Online Newspapers*.

Sloan, L & Quan-Haase, A 2017, *The Sage Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*, Sage Publications, London, UK.

Snelson, CL 2016, 'Qualitative and Mixed Methods Social Media Research: A Review of the Literature', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, pp. 1-15.

Sommers, J 2015, '7/7 Bombings Marked A Journalism "Tipping Point" That Caught News Gatherers Offguard', *Huffington Post UK*, viewed 11 April 2016, <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/07/06/july-7-media-coverage-terrorism_n_7571312.html>.

Sonderman, J 2012, 'How The Tuscaloosa News' Post-Tornado Tweeting Helped Bring Home a Pulitzer Prize', *Poynter.org*, viewed 20 July 2014, <http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/media-lab/social-media/170607/how-the-tuscaloosa-news-post-tornado-tweeting-helped-bring-home-a-pulitzer-prize/>.

Spyridou, L, Matsiola, M, Veglis, A, Kalliris, G and Dimoulas, C 2013, 'Journalism in a State of Flux: Journalists as Agents of Technology Innovation and Emerging News Practices', *International Communication Gazette*, vol. 75, no. 1, pp. 76-98.

Stelter, B 2009, 'Journalism Rules Are Bent in News Coverage From Iran', *New York Times*, viewed 13 July 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/29/business/media/29coverage.html?_r=0>.

Stieglitz, S, Bunker, D, Mirbabaie, M & Ehnis, C 2017, 'Sense-making in social media during extreme events', *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 4-15.

Storyful 2016, *Inside Storyful: Vicarious Trauma and Ensuring the Well-being of the Newsroom*, Storyful, Dublin.

Taft, S 2014, 'How did you help us change the way we report the news?', *BBC News*, viewed 7 July 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-30421631>.

Tang, L & Peidong, Y 2011, 'Symbolic power and the internet: The power of a "horse"', *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 33, no. 5, pp. 675–691.

Tapsall, S 2001, 'The Media is the Message', in Tapsall, S and Varley, C. (eds), *Journalism: Theory in Practice*, Oxford University Press, Victoria, Australia, pp. 235-253.

Taylor, A 2013, 'Is This North Korean Hovercraft-Landing Photo Faked?', *The Atlantic*, viewed 18 March 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2013/03/is-this-north-korean-hovercraft-landing-photo-faked/100480/>.

Tooth, R 2014, 'Graphic content: when photographs of carnage are too upsetting to publish', *The Guardian*, viewed 23 August 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/23/graphic-content-photographs-too-upsetting-to-publish-gaza-mh17-ukraine>.

Trewinnard, T 2014, 'Checkdesk: An Open Verification Toolkit for Journalists in the Digital Age', *Knight News Challenge*, viewed 20 July 2014, <https://newschallenge.org/challenge/2014/evaluation/checkdesk-an-open-verification-toolkit-for-journalists-in-the-digital-age>.

Tuchman, G 1972, 'Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 77, pp. 660-679.

Turner, D 2012, 'Inside the BBC's Verification Hub', *Nieman Reports*, viewed 20 July 2014, <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102764/Inside-the-BBCs-Verification-Hub.aspx>.

Twitter 2016, *Twitter milestones*, Twitter Inc, viewed 22 May 2016, <https://about.twitter.com/company/press/milestones>.

Usher, N & Lewis, S 2011, 'Transparency, Iteration, Standards: Knight-Mozilla's Learning Lab Offers Journalism Lessons of Open Source', *The Nieman Foundation*, viewed July 15 2014, <http://www.niemanlab.org/2011/08/transparency-iteration-standards-knight-mozillas-learning-lab-shares-lessons-of-open-source-for-journalism/>.

Van Dusseldorp, M 2005, 'Mass Audience for London News by the Masses', *Poynter.org*, viewed 25 May 2015, <http://www.poynter.org/news/69944/mass-audience-for-london-news-by-the-masses/>.

Van Dusseldorp, M 2005, 'Bordering on the Irresponsible?', *Poynter*, viewed 5 March 2019, <https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2005/bordering-on-the-irresponsible/>.

Veglis, A & Panagiotou, N 2018, 'Verifying Social Media Content in Crisis Reporting', paper presented to EJTA Teachers Conference, Thessaloniki, Greece.

Vis, F 2012, *The Guardian Datablog's Coverage of the UK Riots*, eds J Gray, L Bounegru & L Chambers, European Journalism Centre and the Open Knowledge Foundation, Sebastopol, USA, <http://datajournalismhandbook.org/1.0/en/case_studies_8.html>.

Vis, F 2013, 'Twitter as a Reporting Tool for Breaking News', *Digital Journalism*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 27-47.

von Nordheim, G, Boczek, K & Koppers, L 2018, 'Sourcing the Sources', *Digital Journalism*, vol. 6, no. 7, pp. 807-828.

Vos, TP & Russell, FM, 2019, 'Theorizing Journalism's Institutional Relationships: An Elaboration of Gatekeeping Theory', *Journalism Studies*, vol. 20, no. 16, pp. 2331-2348.

Waldman, S 2005, 'Arriving at the Digital News Age', *The Nieman Foundation*, viewed 15 July 2014, <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/101064/Arriving-at-the-Digital-News-Age.aspx>.

Walker, A 2019, 'Preparing Students for the Fight Against False Information With Visual Verification and Open Source Reporting', *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, vol. 74, no. 2, pp. 227-239.

Ward, W 2009, 'Social media in the Gaza conflict', *Arab Media & Society*, pp. 1-6.

Wardle, C 2013, 'Verifying User-Generated Content', in Silverman, C (ed) *The Verification Handbook*, European Journalism Centre, Maastricht, The Netherlands, pp. 24-30.

Wardle, C 2017, 'Launching our new Chrome extension NewsCheck', *First Draft*, viewed 24 April 2019, <https://firstdraftnews.org/launching-new-chrome-extension-newscheck/>.

Wardle, C, Dubberley, S & Brown, P 2014, *Amateur Footage: A Global Study of User-Generated Content*, Tow Center for Digital Journalism, New York, USA, <http://towcenter.org/research/amateur-footage-a-global-study-of-user-generated-content/>.

Wasik, B 2012, 'Crowd control: How today's protests, revolts and riots are self-organising', *Wired*, viewed 5 April 2016, <http://www.wired.co.uk/article/crowd-control>.

Waterson, J 2018, 'Guardian Media Group digital revenues outstrip print for first time', *The Guardian*, viewed 17 November 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/jul/24/guardian-media-group-digital-revenues-outstrip-print-for-first-time>.

Watson, H 2012, 'Citizen Journalism as Data for Disaster Research', *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 219-246.

Watson, H 2012, 'Dependent Citizen Journalism and the Publicity of Terror', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 465-482.

Watson, H & Hagen, K 2015, 'An engaged public: Considerations for the use of social media in managing crises', *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 141–154.

Weber, R 1990, *Basic Content Analysis*, Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, Sage Publications, California, USA.

Weller, K, Bruns, A, Burgess, J, Mahrt, M & Puschmann, C 2014, *Twitter and Society*, Peter Lang Publishing, New York, USA.

Welsh, P 2007, 'Disaster Movies', *The Guardian*, viewed 5 March 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/jul/02/disastermovies>.

Wenberg, J 2013, 'Studies show social media has "phenomenal" impact on crisis communication', *The Collegian*, viewed 23 May 2013, <http://www.kstatecollegian.com/2013/05/01/studies-show-social-media-has-phenomenal-impact-on-crisis-communication/>.

WhatsApp 2019, *End-to-end encryption*, WhatsApp, viewed 2 March 2019, <https://faq.whatsapp.com/en/android/28030015/>.

Wilkinson, J, Grant, A & Fisher, D 2009, 'Internet News', in *Principles of Convergent Journalism*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 145-164.

Williams, A, Wardle, C and Wahl-Jorgensen, K 2011, 'Have They Got News for Us?', *Journalism Practice*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 85-99.

Williams, E, 2015, 'The Guardian: ten years on', *Creative Review*, vol 35, pp. 85-88.

Williams, R 2010, 'Why we love bad news', *Psychology Today*, viewed 21 April, 2016, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/wired-success/201012/why-we-love-bad-news>.

Winerman, L 2009, 'Crisis Communication', *Nature*, vol. 457, pp. 376-378.

Winston, B 2013, 'Shouldn't We Care Who's Watching?', *British Journalism Review*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 45-49.

Woodell, KA *Definition of creo*, viewed 31 January 2017, Woodell, K A, New Mexico, <http://latinlexicon.org/definition.php?p1=1003767>.

Wray, R 2010, 'In just 25 years, the mobile phone has transformed the way we communicate', *The Guardian*, viewed 18 March 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2010/jan/01/25-years-phones-transform-communication>.

Xiao, F, Noro, T & Tokuda, T 2014, 'Finding news-topic oriented influential twitter users based on topic related hashtag community detection', *Journal of Web Engineering*, vol. 13, pp. 405-429.

Yin, R 1994, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California.

Yin, R 2014, *Case Study Research: design and methods*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, USA.

Zaki, I 2019, *Natural Born Settlers*, New York, US, 19 March, 2019.

Zapruder, A 2008, *The Undamaged Zapruder Film*, April 15, 2008. Distributed by Robert Harris, viewed 18 October 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kq1PbgeBoQ4>.

Zelizer, B 2004, ‘When Facts, Truth, and Reality are God-terms: On Journalism’s Uneasy Place in Cultural Studies’, *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 100-119.

Zelizer, B 2007, ‘On “Having Been There”: “Eyewitnessing” as a Journalistic Key Word’, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, vol. 24, no. 5, pp. 408-428.

Zelizer, B & Allan, S 2011, *Journalism After September 11*, 2nd edn, Routledge, New York, USA.

Zeng, J, Burgess, J & Bruns, A 2019, ‘Is citizen journalism better than professional journalism for factchecking rumours in China? How Weibo users verified information following the 2015 Tianjin blasts’, *Global Media and China*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 13-35.

Zeng, X, Savyasaachi, J, Nguyen, A & Allan, S 2019, ‘New perspectives on citizen journalism’, *Global Media and China*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 3-12.

Zhang, S 2013, ‘To Construct a Riot: Interpretations and Consequences of the 2011 English Riots’, *The Journal of Politics & Society*, vol. 24, pp. 6-24.

Zubiaga, A, Heravi, B, An, J & Kwak, H 2019, ‘Social media mining for journalism’, *Online Journalism Review*, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 2-6.

Zuckerberg, R 2013, *Dot Complicated: Untangling Our Wired Lives*, HarperOne, San Francisco, USA.

Appendix 1: Social media text count and coding

Crisis event	Year	No. of articles
London Bombings	2005	16
England Riots	2011	112
Lee Rigby death	2013	39

Table 2: Articles mentioning social media and/or using texts as a news source

Coding term used for interviews	Related terms used in newspaper articles studied
Photograph	Picture, image, mobile phone pictures
Video	Film/ing/ed, footage
Social media	Social media forums, social recommendation, social networks, social networking sites
Other media	Internet forums, open web, podcasts

Table 3: Coding terms

Appendix 2: Social media text counts by case

Social media texts used	7/7	8/7	9/7	11/7	12/7	13/7	14/7	15/7	16/7	18/7	19/7	20/7	**Total texts (by type)**
Photographs	0	0	3	4	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	**12**
Videos	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**5**
Blogs	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	**6**
Blackberry Messenger (BBM)/Texts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Tweets	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Facebook posts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Social media (not specified)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Other media (forums/podcasts)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	**3**
Total texts used in articles (by date)	**0**	**0**	**4**	**13**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**8**	-

Table 4: London Bombings Data – July 2005

Social media texts used	6/8	8/8	9/8	10/8	11/8	12/8	13/8	15/8	16/8	17/8	18/8	19/8	**Total texts (by type)**
Photographs	0	2	4	6	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	**13**
Videos	0	2	2	4	2	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	**22**
Blogs	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	**5**
Blackberry Messenger (BBM)/Texts	0	2	11	4	2	3	3	2	3	2	0	0	**32**
Tweets	0	1	5	10	5	4	13	6	0	0	2	0	**46**
Facebook posts	0	2	2	0	0	2	3	0	0	2	8	1	**20**
Social media (not specified)	0	4	7	6	0	9	2	2	3	3	0	0	**36**
Other media (forums/podcasts)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Total texts used in articles (by date)	**0**	**13**	**31**	**30**	**9**	**25**	**26**	**16**	**6**	**7**	**10**	**1**	-

Table 5: England Riots Data – August 2011

Social media texts used	23/5	24/5	25/5	27/5	28/5	29/5	30/5	31/5	1/6	3/6	4/6	5/6	**Total texts (by type)**
Photographs	3	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**9**
Videos	4	3	0	1	1	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	**13**
Blogs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Blackberry Messenger (BBM)/Texts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Tweets	2	4	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	**11**
Facebook posts	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**2**
Social media (not specified)	0	3	2	0	6	3	0	0	0	1	2	0	**17**
Other media (forums/podcasts)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Total texts used in articles (by date)	**9**	**17**	**2**	**3**	**8**	**4**	**3**	**0**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**0**	-

Table 6: Lee Rigby Murder Data – May-June 2013

Appendix 3: Research Interviews

Bates, S 2016, Phone interview with Johanna Baker-Dowdell, 23 February 2016.

Campbell, D 2016, Phone interview with Johanna Baker-Dowdell, 1 March 2016.

Corfield, G 2016, Phone interview with Johanna Baker-Dowdell, 15 March 2016.

Dennen, A 2016, Phone interview with Johanna Baker-Dowdell, 5 February 2016.

Higgins, E 2016, Phone interview with Johanna Baker-Dowdell, 7 June 2016.

Irons, M 2016, Skype interview with Johanna Baker-Dowdell, 8 April 2016.

Malik, S 2016, Skype interview with Johanna Baker-Dowdell, 25 March 2016.

McIntosh, N 2016, Phone interview with Johanna Baker-Dowdell, 23 May 2016.

Oliver, L 2016, Skype interview with Johanna Baker-Dowdell, 17 May 2016.

Quinn, B 2016, Phone interview with Johanna Baker-Dowdell, 25 February 2016.

Smith, L 2016, Phone interview with Johanna Baker-Dowdell, 1 March 2016.

Sparrow, A 2016, Phone interview with Johanna Baker-Dowdell, 8 April 2016.

Walker, P 2016, Skype interview with Johanna Baker-Dowdell, 12 April 2016.